

**GENERATION Y INTERNS' EXPERIENCES WITH, AND PERCEPTIONS OF,  
COLLABORATION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Education

in the Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

by

Vincent R. Mamer

## **PERMISSION TO USE**

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department of Educational Administration or the Dean. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without written permission from the researcher. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to the researcher and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Head of the Department of Educational Administration  
University of Saskatchewan  
28 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X1  
Canada

OR

Dean  
College of Graduate Studies and Research  
University of Saskatchewan  
107 Administration Place  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2  
Canada

## **ABSTRACT**

Using a phenomenological approach, the purpose of this study was to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internships. The theoretical framework of this study reviewed three distinct areas of literature: Generation Y and their role in the professional workforce, the induction and retention of new teachers, and the role of professional learning communities in schools. Both transcendental and hermeneutical approaches to phenomenology were employed in the analysis of interview data. The data for this study were obtained from in-depth interviews with five post-internship students at the University of Saskatchewan. The findings of this study revealed that the cultural characteristics of Generation Y teachers play a role in the desire of interns to engage in professional collaboration and have an impact on the profession as they see it. The implications of this paper outline that more research is needed to examine the effect of professional learning communities on the development of interns' pedagogical skill and on the impact that Generation Y teachers will have on the way education is delivered in the future. Furthermore, when considering the nature of Generation Y interns and teachers, collaboration must be nurtured and emphasized as part of teacher education and induction programs, including the internship.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my talented advisor, Dr. Michelle Prytula, thank you for your encouragement, for challenging me, and for your patience. I am grateful for your support and guidance through this process. You have been a true mentor and teacher. I have enjoyed your humor and positive outlook during the past year.

To my committee, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Dr. Vivian Hajnal, Dr. Pat Renihan, Dr. Paul Orlowski, and Dr. Dianne Miller, your feedback and suggestions have been most helpful. Thank you for the diverse perspectives that you each brought to the committee, you challenged me to consider many ideas in new ways and added to my learning experience. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and appreciated the opportunity to drop by your offices if I had questions or needed to work through a problem or an idea.

Thank you to my school division, Saskatoon Public Schools, for the opportunity to take a full time educational leave this past year. This opportunity has been a very rewarding, I am thankful to work in a division that supports this type of professional development and that supports lifelong learning.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and support during this past year. Thank you especially to my wife Yvonne, your continual support has been invaluable. I know that you have made sacrifices this year so that I could finish this work, thank you for your patience and understanding. I feel truly blessed to have you in my life.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my parents, Helen and Gerry Mamer, my first and best teachers.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM .....	1
Rationale for Research.....	2
Demographic Data.....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions.....	4
Context.....	5
Importance of this Study .....	6
Initial Definitions Applicable to this Study .....	8
Delimitations .....	9
Limitations .....	9
Assumptions .....	10
Establishing Epoche .....	11
Organization of the Thesis.....	16
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	17
Defining Generation Y .....	18
Coddled and Cocky .....	22
Searching for Meaning.....	23
Collaborative in Nature .....	24
Educated and Driven.....	25
Plugged in at Work.....	25
Asserting Their View of the World.....	27
Dealing with adversity.....	28

<b>Generation Y in the Workforce .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Generation Y Teachers .....</b>	<b>30</b>
The nature of teaching and motivation. ....	31
<b>The Effect on School Divisions .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Less formal administrator supervision. ....	32
Up-to-date and reliable technology.....	33
Increased professional collaboration.....	34
<b>Induction and Retention.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Alone in the Classroom.....</b>	<b>37</b>
The importance of collaboration.....	39
<b>The Importance of Mentorship.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Schools as High-Performing Workplaces.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>The Imperative for Professional Learning Communities .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>PLCs and Their Connection to Generation Y .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Purpose of this Study .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Philosophical Assumptions.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Phenomenological Examination .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Phenomenological perspectives.....	57
The transcendental perspective.....	58
Bias and Epoche.....	59
The hermeneutical perspective.....	60
Intentionality: Noema and Noesis.....	61
<b>Method of the Study .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Piloting the Research Protocol .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Purposeful Sampling.....</b>	<b>62</b>
Participant selection strategy.....	63
<b>Data Collection .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Ethical Considerations.....</b>	<b>68</b>
Data storage.....	68

Potential Significance of Study.....	69
Summary.....	69
<b>A TRANSCENDETAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>The Interns.....</b>	<b>72</b>
Ryan .....	73
Monica .....	74
Isabelle .....	75
Lisa .....	76
Zoe .....	77
<b>Themes Emerging From the Data.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Hopes and Expectations.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Sink or Swim .....</b>	<b>82</b>
Extracurricular Roles.....	88
<b>Barriers to Effectiveness .....</b>	<b>91</b>
Officious Cooperating Teachers .....	92
Public Support from Cooperating Teachers .....	95
Systemic Barriers .....	98
<b>Opportunities for Collaboration.....</b>	<b>99</b>
Resource Sharing.....	100
Resource and Lesson Development.....	102
Co-teaching with Others.....	105
Perceptions of Ineffective Collaboration .....	108
Time for collaboration.....	109
<b>Preparation and Learning.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Workload and Experience .....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Passion and Perspective.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>FINDINGS THROUGH A HERMENUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>From Expectations to Experiences .....</b>	<b>121</b>
Interns Expected a Mentoring Relationship .....	121
Interns Wanted to Learn from Others.....	124
Interns Were Often Left to Figure Things out for Themselves.....	125



Dealing with negative feedback and conflict.....	127
<b>Finding Collaborative Relationships.....</b>	<b>128</b>
Resource Sharing Guided Collaboration .....	128
Time for Collaboration was Not Provided .....	131
<b>A Cultural Disconnect: Disillusionment and Resilience .....</b>	<b>135</b>
The Desire to Collaborate Remained After the Internship.....	135
High Expectations of the Profession .....	136
Preparation for Teaching and Dealing with the Workload .....	140
Interns Desired Feedback on Performance .....	140
Interns Encountered Heavy Workloads and Required Support.....	141
Interns Expressed a Commitment and Passion for Teaching.....	143
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>FINAL THOUGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Implications .....</b>	<b>150</b>
Implications for Theory .....	151
Implications for Research .....	153
Implications for Practice .....	155
<b>Reflections on Phenomenological Research .....</b>	<b>157</b>
Taking Time to Understand and Establish Epoch.....	158
Recognizing the Themes as They Emerged .....	158
Making Sense of it All .....	159
<b>Final Thoughts .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>164</b>
Application for Approval of Research Protocol .....	164
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>171</b>
Participant Recruitment Documents .....	171
<b>Appendix C.....</b>	<b>177</b>
Consent Forms and Confidentiality Agreements .....	177
<b>Appendix D.....</b>	<b>181</b>
Interview Protocol.....	181

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Current North American Generations</i> .....	20
--	----

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Venn diagram model of the theoretical framework.....	18
<i>Figure 2.</i> From expectations to experiences.....	123
<i>Figure 3.</i> Finding collaborative relationships.....	130
<i>Figure 4.</i> Generation Y culture shock.....	138

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Generation Y is beginning to enter the workforce en masse and this will have repercussions for human resources in both private and public organizations (Shaffer, 2008). Generation Y is currently overtaking the Baby Boomers as the largest demographic group in the workplace (Shaffer, 2008). The literature reveals that members of Generation Y share some common traits that characterize their collective worldview. They have been brought up with a strong belief in their own self-worth and capacity to make a difference in the world around them (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). The literature on Generation Y also shows that members of this generation desire to engage in meaningful work and that they prefer to share and construct knowledge through collaboration (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). It is also clear from a literature review of Generation Y in the workforce that there is relatively little research on the impact of this generation on the field of education. Behrstock and Clifford (2009) recognized that the private sector is ahead of public sector employers, including educational institutions, in examining the characteristics and the impacts of this new generation on the workplace.

There is a sizable body of literature that examines the topic of induction and retention within the field of teaching. Various researchers have examined how the first years of a teacher's career have an impact on their career development, the quality of their instruction, and how long they will ultimately remain in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Furthermore, the work of various researchers has begun to examine the impacts that Generation Y teachers will have on the recruitment and retention practices of school divisions' and their approach to human

resources management (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

Research supports the positive impacts of collaboration and the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a means for improving student learning and teachers' professional practice (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2006; Hellner, 2008; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). There is overlap with the literature on Generation Y especially as it relates to the concept of collaboration and the aptitude that members of Generation Y have for working collaboratively. This is a common theme in the literature as it relates to both teachers and to other professionals (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Shaffer, 2008; Tulgan, 2009).

At the crux of these three bodies of research is a need to understand how the experiences of neophyte teachers and teacher candidates about to enter the profession, the majority of who are members of Generation Y, shape their perception of what it means to be an effective teacher, how they view the profession as a whole and their desire to remain a part of it, and how to improve student learning and make a positive impact on the practice of teaching.

### **Rationale for Research**

In October 2011 I had the opportunity to be involved in a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded study conducted at the University of Saskatchewan entitled *The emerging teacher: Examining the development of teacher identity through cohort induction models*. The purpose of the study was to identify and examine the key factors that affect the identity formation of pre-service

teachers. As a member of the research team I was able to give input into some of the questions that were administered to students in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Several questions that related to the characteristics of Generation Y teachers were included in the web survey. One hundred and thirty six students responded to the web based survey that fit the age criteria for Generation Y. The results of one question in particular stood out as requiring further investigation. The literature on Generation Y suggests that members of this generation prefer collaborative work. The survey indicated that this was true of the teacher candidates before their internship but was significantly less important to the interns in their first few months of their practicum. The question becomes, does this represent a trend that continues through internship and into the first years of teaching, is it an irregularity between the two groups, or does the practice of teaching somehow affect a teacher's view of the importance of collaboration?

### **Demographic Data**

The demographic data collected reflects a group of students who represented nearly the entire age range used to define Generation Y. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 31 years of age. The mean age was 22.86 years ( $SD = 2.42$ ). The current mean age for Generation Y is 23 years. Other demographic data included: gender, 25.7% ( $n = 35$ ) of the respondents were male and 74.3% ( $n = 101$ ) were female; program, 50% ( $n = 68$ ) of respondents were training to become elementary teachers and 50% ( $n = 68$ ) were training to become high-school teachers; 14% ( $n = 19$ ) of respondents were enrolled in an Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP); and 89.6% ( $n = 121$ ) were entering education as their first career. Of the respondents 50.7% ( $n = 69$ ) had not yet interned and 49.3% ( $n = 67$ ) were currently interning.

Respondents were asked to respond using a Likert scale that directed them to indicate their responses on a scale of 0 - 10 (0 being "not important at all" and 10 being "essential"). Respondents were asked how important various conditions were in creating a positive working environment for them as a teacher. Of the questions that were included that related to Generation Y teacher candidates (pre-internship) and interns, four emerged that indicated a significant difference (using a 0.1 alpha level) between the responses of pre-internship teacher candidates and interns. The data analysis showed that teacher candidates placed greater importance on working as part of a collaborative team than did interns who were working in the field ( $p = 0.012$ ). This was unexpected in light of the literature on Generation Y that indicates that collaboration is a trait that is highly valued by members of this generation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Using a phenomenological approach the purpose of this study was to investigate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration following their internships.

### **Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do select Generation Y interns experience collaboration?
2. What are those select Generation Y interns' perceptions of collaboration as a result of their experiences?

Within this study a position of social constructivism was adhered to. There was a presumption that interns are changed through their experience and that their understanding of teaching culture and professional conduct is built upon their previous

experiences and beliefs (Creswell, 2007). Social constructivism also assumes that concepts and theories are constructed out of the stories that are relayed by the research participants (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). As such social constructivism is a natural perspective to use when approaching a phenomenological study.

### **Context**

The context of this study may provide insight to other researchers and teachers helping them to distinguish similarities and differences in their own situations. While there are many positive stories about specific educational events, programs, and individual accomplishment, Levin (2004) observed that “ the coverage of the educational system as a whole tends to be negative” (p. 274). The result of this negativity could be a failure by the media to pay adequate attention to the underlying causes of events and only focus on a snapshot of issues (Levin, 2004). Within the context of a conservative provincial government, which has focused on improving educational accountability, this may lead to the development of policy that attempts to hold educators and school divisions accountable without truly addressing the underlying barriers to and supports for improving educational outcomes. Over the past two years, perhaps as a result of the most recent round of provincial collective bargaining between the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and the provincial government, education has been the focus of increasing media coverage in Saskatchewan. This coverage has included both positive stories about educational initiatives, individual school successes, and student achievements. It has also included a more critical examination of the educational system in Saskatchewan, punctuated by negative media coverage and advertisements by the provincial government

in an attempt to claim public support during the last round of provincial collective bargaining.

This study was conducted at the University of Saskatchewan in the College of Education. The College of Education places interns in schools across the central and northern part of the province into both urban and rural settings. The interns who participated in this study were students in the sequential program of study which requires 60 credit units of study in the College of Arts and Sciences or the College of Kinesiology to be completed before a student is admitted as a teacher candidate (University of Saskatchewan, 2012). In the second year of the sequential program students are required to complete a sixteen week internship (University of Saskatchewan, 2011a). These students were immersed in schools in the current era of educational reform and accountability, with each school engaging in different initiatives and different approaches to meet student learning needs.

### **Importance of this Study**

There is considerable literature to indicate that collaboration is a highly desirable trait within the Generation Y population (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Cogshall, et al., 2010; Coley, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Coley (2009) observed that Generation Y teachers desire meaningful collaboration and can recognize the difference between this and superfluous committee work. As a whole, Generation Y is made up of highly educated individuals who have grown up with unprecedented access to technology and information (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). As a result of the way in which they were raised, being made to feel special and sheltered from failure by their parents, they expect to be high achievers (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Members of



Generation Y learn and work well together and have “emerged as a group of young adults who like collaboration and working with others” (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010, p. 5).

Generation Y is not alone in their desire for meaningful collaboration. Coggshall et al. (2010) found that teachers of all ages desire meaningful collaboration. There is an imperative to establish a lasting culture of collaboration within schools which PLCs are designed to do (Fullan, 2006). Therefore it is essential to better understand the nature of the collaborative involvement of interns as they enter the workforce. Understanding interns’ experiences in the context of professional collaboration may help to inform how they are impacted by the organizations, structures, and relationships around them. This study attempts to provide additional insight into theory on members of Generation Y as they enter the teaching profession. This study addresses a gap in the literature regarding how Generation Y culture, the culture of teaching, and the nature of collaborative work in schools interact. Finally this study uses both transcendental and hermeneutical methodologies (as described in Chapter Three) to examine select Generation Y interns’ experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internship adding to the body of research in the areas of Generation Y teachers, induction and retention, and professional collaboration.

This study provides insight into the experiences of interns, which has implications in research, practice, and theory in the area of induction and retention of Generation Y teachers.

### **Initial Definitions Applicable to this Study**

Generation Y: People born between 1979 and 1997 who share common experiences and understandings of the world that are based on popular culture and their historic perspective (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Pletka, 2007; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Reynolds, Bush, & Geist, 2008; Shaffer, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2007).

Professional Learning Community: An instructional community of teachers, which focuses on student learning, supports professional collaboration and continual professional learning. PLCs are characterized by established group norms about the goals, roles, and expected outcomes; PLCs use data to guide decisions about how to improve student learning; finally PLCs supports a de-individualized culture of teaching in which teachers work collaboratively to analyze and improve their practice (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2006; Vescio, et al., 2008).

Collaboration: work done with other teachers or educational staff in a regular and organized process in order to examine and improve upon classroom practices and improves student performance or experience (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2006).

Internship (placement): a sixteen week practicum in which a teacher candidate works in a school to develop professional competence, gain practical experience and knowledge about the teaching profession (University of Saskatchewan, 2011a).

Induction: programs designed to support and guide a teacher candidate into the profession of teaching through formal or informal methods. This may include one or more of the following: mentorship, workshops, or seminars (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

### **Delimitations**

This study focuses on interns from the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan and their internship experiences at schools across the province of Saskatchewan. Utilizing purposeful sampling as described by Creswell (2007) and Merriam (2009), five participants were selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The data were collected during the University of Saskatchewan winter semester, which ran from January to April 2012, while the interns were completing their final semester of study. The data includes both the transcendental description of the experiences of the selected interns and a hermeneutical interpretation of these experiences within the context of the literature on Generation Y.

### **Limitations**

Inherent to phenomenology is the limitation of the participant to recall and elucidate their experiences. This was addressed by conducting the interviews as quickly as was possible to reduce the distance of the memories from the interview. Interns were contacted by phone after the review of their initial responses to ask for more clarity and depth to the responses where appropriate.

Hermeneutics is the focus of the second part of this study, as described in Chapter Three. Hermeneutical analysis implies a degree of interpretation, which is dependent on the researcher. Bias becomes a limitation in that the hermeneutical interpretation of the interns' experiences was conducted through the eyes of the researcher, which are affected by personal worldview and experiences. Furthermore, because the interpretation is of the interns' experiences and observations, there will also be information that remains unseen by the researcher. Bracketing one's experiences and establishing epoche can expose and

reduce personal bias as much as possible. This improves the researcher's ability to conduct a reflective analysis that relates the core of the experiences of the participants in terms of commonality and themes that relate to the literature on the topic of Generation Y.

In the survey that was used to examine the initial responses of teacher candidates and interns, different groups of students were compared. A more complete study would track the responses of a single group over the course of their time in the College of Education including the internship and then into the first few years of their career. More comprehensive research in this area is possible and may be the focus of future studies.

This study examines a narrow subset of Generation Y members, as such the characteristics of Generation Y are based in the context of University students who have had access to high levels of educational opportunity and who are about to enter the professional workplace. Within the age cohort described in this study there is a significant variance in the socio-economic status of Generation Y. This study does not examine the overall experiences of the entire Generation Y age cohort as previously defined; rather it focuses on the literature outlining the characteristics of Generation Y professionals and the experiences of a select group of Generation Y university students about to begin their professional careers.

### **Assumptions**

Van Manen (1990) observed that "the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much" (p. 46). Having lived the experience of an internship and five years of practice in the classroom my knowledge of the subject is already impacted by my own

experiences. As illustrated by van Manen (1990), establishing epoche is more than simply trying to forget the experience, rather the effort must be made to bracket these experiences by making an explicit statement of one's own experiences and then setting them aside. This allows the researcher to come to terms with their own assumptions and to put them aside while the research is being conducted.

To conduct this study I made the assumption that the participants had an understanding of collaborative experiences and that they would be able to explain those experiences in a meaningful way. I also assumed that some effect was present during the internship that had an impact on the interns' perceptions of collaboration.

The literature on members Generation Y is generic in nature. While the definition of this group is not necessarily specific to a specific socio-cultural group, the literature and descriptions in this study refer for the most part to occidental middle class youth who have grown up with access to technology and educational opportunity.

### **Establishing Epoche**

It is not fully possible to fully detach one's self from my own experiences or bias; however, I have attempted to set aside my own prejudgment by sharing some of my background and perspective on the topic. I have attempted here to, as Moustakas (1994) described, set aside my own understandings, judgment and knowledge about the phenomenon and to look at it from "the vantage point of a pure transcendental ego" (p. 33).

I came to this study after having completed five years of teaching in the classroom. During this period I received virtually no induction and was left to sink or swim, as Anhorn (2008) described, according to my own ability and devices. Nevertheless I felt

well equipped to deal with the challenges of being a new teacher. I have grown up in a family of teachers, with the narrative of what it means to be a teacher discussed at the kitchen table and with provincial perspectives being shared in my grandmother's living room. I was also very fortunate to have two excellent informal mentors as I entered the teaching profession. The first was an elementary school principal who supported me through opportunities to volunteer in his school as a student and by his friendship and advice as I entered the field. The other was a senior teacher whose classroom neighbored mine in the collegiate where I eventually found permanent employment. Their advice and insight have been incredibly valuable and I hold their lessons with me every time I enter the classroom. During my time in the teaching profession I have come to appreciate the importance of good mentorship through my family and my informal mentors. At the same time I have developed a curiosity about the lack of formal induction, collaboration, and supervision I have experienced in these early years of my career.

Within my own internship experience I did have opportunity for meaningful professional collaboration with my supervising teacher. My supervising teacher was a senior teacher with 29 years of classroom experience. We taught in a grade five and six split classroom and had students who came from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Because the school was situated in a small northern city in Saskatchewan there was a high First Nations component to the school demographic. Within the classroom there were several students who required special intervention in literacy. My supervising teacher and I developed special individual and small group reading interventions for the below grade readers and were able to track improvements in their literacy over the course of the four months that I was placed at the school. This work set

a foundation for my own views of the importance of purposeful collaboration focused on student learning. I acknowledge that as I perform the research for this study that I have a belief that collaboration is important for both the professional development of teachers and the enhancement of student learning.

During my teaching career I have been exposed to opportunity for collaborative work through my own initiative but have had less opportunity to be part of a structured collaborative community that focused specifically on student learning. I will briefly describe two experiences that I found valuable in my practice. When I began my full time teaching career in a large collegiate I sought out collaborators for various learning initiatives. The result of my collaborative initiative resulted in partnerships with teachers with whom I shared some common interests with both professionally and personally. In the first example, a colleague and I developed a program that overlapped curricular objectives of the Science 10 curriculum with the Native Studies 30 curriculum. The product of our work was a two-day camping excursion to a nature conservatory with two full days of programming and guest presenters. The experience was very enriching both professionally and personally and provided students with opportunities for hands on learning. Unfortunately the teacher with whom I was collaborating was transferred the following year and I was not able to find another teacher willing to build on the work that we had started. The second example was a collaborative endeavor with another teacher in a specific program aimed at gifted learners. This collaboration was more structured and resulted in some positive programming aimed at challenging students to be creative and to improve their writing skills. This process included block scheduling of students and multiple opportunities for team teaching and assessment and was encouraged by the

school leadership team. I view both of these collaborative experiences as successful endeavors and found that they enhanced student learning through progressive skill development and experiential learning. I went into this study expecting that these types of collaborative experiences exist between other teachers and interns and I am intensely curious about how they impact student learning and professional growth.

As I reflected on my experiences before undertaking this study I found myself frustrated by the lack of support and that I was exposed to in my first few years of teaching, especially in light of the positive experience that I had as an intern. Despite the positive experiences that I have outlined above these were the exception rather than the rule. From my own experience I suspect that collaboration is not a consistent part of the teaching profession. I experienced a sink or swim mentality regarding new teachers. As a result I am determined to improve collaboration in the learning communities that I will be a part of in the future. The best experiences that I have had in teaching have occurred when working with others, whether it was with cultural consultants, community members, or other teachers. I have seen the benefits of collaboration, which include increased interest in student outcomes and experiences, greater accountability, and increased personal connection to students and collaborators. In my internship experience I also witnessed firsthand how meaningful collaboration can positively influence student-learning outcomes and in my specific example improve literacy. I recognize that I have strong emotions and opinions regarding the nature of collaboration within schools and how the induction of new teachers is carried out in Saskatchewan schools at present. As I recognized these biases and opinions before I undertook this study, I was cautious to set them aside as much as was possible while I conducted this study.



Finally I had the opportunity in my last year of teaching to participate in a formal leadership role in my learning community as a Learning Coordinator (Department Head) for the Social Science department at the collegiate where I was employed. In this role I was able to participate in the goal setting process for the school and had a position that could guide the direction of the Social Studies department, which consisted of about seven staff members. In this role I came to the understanding that collaboration can be fostered in formal and informal ways; I believe there is a place for both models in a school. It was my experience that purposeful collaboration occurs when the culture is present to allow it to flourish. Trying to create collaboration seems to be more difficult than creating the conditions under which teachers begin to collaborate on their own. As a result I am of the belief that collaboration is most effective when it is teacher driven and the leadership of a learning community implement policy to support and involve all staff in this process by creating opportunities for this to occur.

By identifying my own experiences, beliefs, and intuitions about collaboration and the experiences that interns may have when entering into a learning community I will endeavor to set these aside and see the participants' experiences through their own eyes. It is through these experiences that I have come to be interested in the topic of professional collaboration in education. As such they are important in that they affect my own worldview and guide my thought process. By being conscious of these experiences and how they have affected my view of education and the profession of teaching, and engaging in studying the methods of phenomenological research, I endeavored to set my consciousness aside as much as possible and examine the experiences of interns from a neutral standpoint.

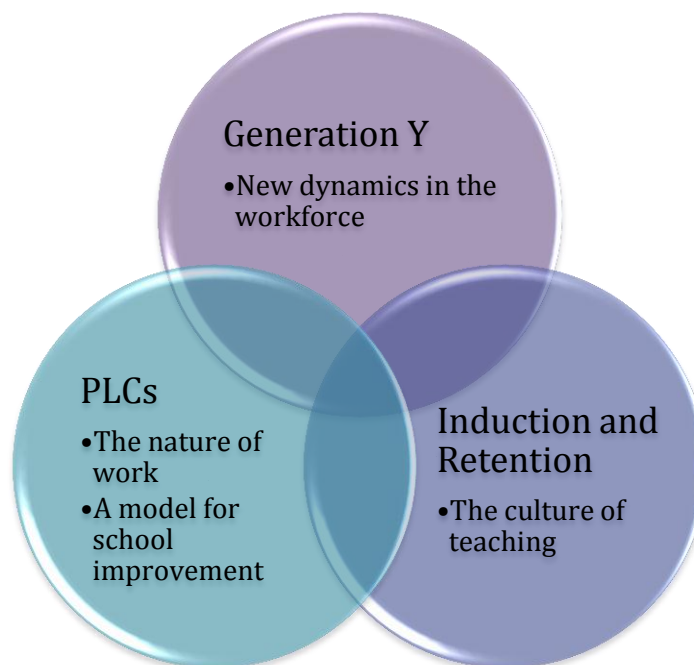
### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter One has outlined the rational and background of the study. This chapter also identifies the research questions, the importance of the study, along with the assumptions and understandings that I bring into the study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature pertaining to Generation Y, the induction and retention of new teachers, and the value of PLCs. Chapter Three describes the research design, methodology, and philosophical approach used to conduct this study. Chapter Four contains the transcendental account of the research. Chapter Five contains the hermeneutical analysis of the participants' experiences. Chapter Six includes discussion, findings, and implications for future research.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

For this study there were three major areas of research that were reviewed that demonstrated some overlap: literature relating to Generation Y and the entrance of its members into the workforce; literature on the current culture of teaching and its relation to induction and retention of new teachers, many of whom are now members of Generation Y; and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), their relation to the nature of professional conduct in schools and the nature of teachers' work. The literature reveals that there is some overlap amongst these three themes but that there is a gap in the literature when trying to connect all three (see Figure 1).

New research on collaboration is beginning to show that professional collaboration and the implementation of PLCs have the ability to make significant improvements in the learning outcomes of students (Vescio, et al., 2008). Vescio et al. (2008) found, in an examination of eleven studies on the impact of PLCs on teaching practice and student learning, that all of the studies suggested that PLCs had affected change in the schools' culture where they had been implemented. At the same time Generation Y is beginning to make its mark on the professional workforce (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). Members of Generation Y are particularly suited for collaboration and have an overall desire to affect change in the way that education is currently practiced (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Furthermore members of Generation Y are both motivated to contribute to the world around them in a positive way and to dedicating themselves to making education a lifelong career (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggsall, et al., 2010; Pletka, 2007).



*Figure 1.* Venn diagram model of the theoretical framework of the literature reviewed for this study. This study will concentrate on the crux of these three bodies of research.

Despite the desire of many new teachers to work in a more collaborative environment, especially when it comes to the working relationship with their direct supervisor, a sink or swim mentality still exists in many schools (Anhorn, 2008; Coggs, et al., 2010). Coggs et al. (2010) recognized that Generation Y teachers highly value continuing and regular feedback about improving their performance.

### **Defining Generation Y**

While there is no static set of traits that can be used to identify a single generation there are some characteristics that can be used to draw conclusions about changes in the ways in which people of different generations work and learn. Unlike ethnic, religious, or geographical cultural indicators, generational culture is defined by shared experiences and a common understanding of the world based on popular culture and an historical perspective that is understood through a person's age (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009;

Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). As a result there are shared characteristics that emerge which can be used to define each generation (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). In general Generation Y is made up of people currently entering the workforce and finishing up high school. For the purpose of this study Generation Y will be defined as those who were born between 1979 and 1997, which is the range generally described by other researchers in this area (see Table 1). This means that teachers encounter Generation Y culture both in students and colleagues. The characteristics were synthesized through developing a list of descriptors that various researchers had applied to each generation and then extracting similarities and commonly reported traits (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Pletka, 2007; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Reynolds, et al., 2008; Shaffer, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2007). This generation is also characterized by the disparity between those who have access to financial resources, technology, and post-secondary education and those who do not. Tapscott (2009) described this as two generations of the same age: “one thriving and one failing” (p. 133). The literature relating to members Generation Y entering the professional workforce tends to focus on young well educated professionals who, as Tapscott recognized, make up the most ethnically diverse and female dominated university population to date. Minorities such as Aboriginal students are underrepresented in today’s university populations. As a result the literature on Generation Y professionals does exclude a large number of people who fall into the age demographic of generation Y but who have not had access to professional training or university education as a result of their socio-economic status.

Table 1  
*Current North American Generations*

Generation	Years of birth	Characteristics
Veterans	Born before 1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer formality and face-to-face communication</li> <li>• Trusting of authority and hierarchy in the workplace</li> <li>• Loyal</li> <li>• Information available in a reasonable time frame and digestible amounts</li> </ul>
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semiformal</li> <li>• Prefer face-to-face contact</li> <li>• Career focused and accepting of institutional rules and hierarchies in the workplace</li> <li>• Optimistic</li> <li>• Want information handy and as needed</li> </ul>
Generation X <sup>a</sup>	1965–1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Comfortable with electronic communication and face to face when needed</li> <li>• Lack of trust in authority or hierarchies in the workplace</li> <li>• Self-reliant and cynical</li> <li>• Want information immediately when needed</li> </ul>
Generation Y <sup>a</sup>	1979–1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual</li> <li>• Communicate more through technology</li> <li>• Desire purposeful work based on values and morals</li> <li>• Desire to trust authority figures in the workplace and to be led by example.</li> <li>• Work well collegially but desire individualized feedback</li> <li>• Achievement focused</li> <li>• Desire to get ahead</li> <li>• Access information immediately as needed and in context to the task at hand</li> </ul>

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Not all sources agree on the range of Generation X and Generation Y. Ranges for Generation Y vary from beginning as early as 1977 to as late as 2002. Other sources may use varying year ranges to describe each generation.

University educated and professional members of Generation Y, in general, desire purposeful work based on values and morals (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Like their Baby Boomer parents, members of Generation Y want to have strong leadership in the workplace; however, they may be prone to disregard hierarchies and overstep their bounds (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). They want to be able to

trust authority figures that set a good example, provide timely and individual feedback, and respect the opinions of their Generation Y employees (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Reynolds, et al., 2008). Members of Generation Y are also achievement focused and expect to contribute to the work of the professional community to which they belong. This sometimes causes members of Generation Y to be viewed as overconfident, insubordinate, or ignorant of workplace hierarchies (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Perhaps because members of Generation Y have been coddled by their parents more so than previous generations, they exhibit a belief that their ideas have more merit than they actually may (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Lancaster and Stillman (2010) suggested that managers should look at focusing the efforts of their Generation Y employees and create avenues for them to constructively explore their ideas rather than punishing them for inappropriate workplace conduct such as overstepping their bounds and jumping chains of communication within the organization.

In reviewing the literature on Generation Y members and their entrance into the workforce, several definitive characteristics have emerged which may help to explain the behaviors and expectations of this large demographic group (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). These characteristics are not intended to be complimentary or derogatory, rather they are factors that will need to be considered by employers in both the private and public sector in order to entice and retain this growing group of new employees, and for administrators to understand the effects of this demographic shift on human resource management (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010)

## **Coddled and Cocky**

The first characteristic prevalent in the literature is a sense of self-confidence. Generation Y is referred to as a group that has been overly praised or rewarded as they have grown up (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). Members of Generation Y have been protected and nurtured by their parents who have kept them busy and involved; their parents have instilled in them a sense of their own self-worth and ability to make a difference in the world around them (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). They are characterized by their creativity and self-confidence which can sometimes result in an apparent disregard for social or personnel structures in the workplace (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). This can manifest itself in terms of questioning authority or identifying problems in the workplace that are above their pay grade (Tulgan, 2009).

Members of Generation Y have, for the most part, Baby Boomer parents who waited until later in life to have children and had fewer of them (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). At the same time there was an increased belief by parents that they could affect their children's success in life by being more directly involved in their development (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). The result has been a parental culture of managing and guiding their children's lives from birth until they enter the workforce and beyond (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). This involvement has led to the label 'helicopter parents' being assigned to this group of parents who will swoop down to solve problems and challenges that their children may face in education and employment (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). The increased involvement of parents is evident, as universities have created



programs to orient and prepare parents for their children's entrance into university. For example, the University of Saskatchewan conducts parallel programs for parents at both "Experience US" and "On Campus Day," which are designed to inform prospective students about courses and programs (University of Saskatchewan, 2011c, 2011d). The university also provides a parent orientation, which runs parallel to the student orientation at the beginning of the fall semester (University of Saskatchewan, 2011b). The emergence of these programs may indicate that institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan are being moved to cater to increasingly involved parents.

Within the workforce this has implications for Generation X managers who may not understand the context in which their new Generation Y employees grew up (Bartlett & LeRose, 2010). This can be problematic when members of these generations interact in the workforce. Generation X managers may believe that their younger employees are overly demanding and unrealistic, while Generation Y employees feel isolated and undervalued (Tulgan, 2009).

### **Searching for Meaning**

The second characteristic prevalent in the literature is that members of Generation Y are creative, innovative, and self-confident. As a result they have a strong desire to engage in meaningful work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). As potential employees, they have grown up in an interconnected world with a keen awareness of global issues including: global warming, poverty and various political issues (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Members of Generation Y have been brought up to believe that they are capable of achieving whatever they apply themselves to (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). "When it comes to work, if they are going to be spending hours of

their day on a job, they want to feel that they are making a dent” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010, p. 93).

Because of their connection to their parents while they were being raised and their connection to their friends via text message and social media, members of Generation Y tend to place a high value on family and insist on developing a healthy work life balance (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Members of Generation Y have grown up in a world that is more interconnected than ever before and, as is the case in many western cities, more culturally diverse. They have broader understanding of the global community than previous generations, resulting from growing up in an age of increasing globalization. These traits, paired with their connection to their families, have given Generation Y members a strong sense of morality and a desire for inclusiveness and tolerance, one that they expect to see in their places of work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Tapscott, 2009; Tulgan, 2009).

### **Collaborative in Nature**

Another important characteristic of members of Generation Y is that they have a highly developed desire for collaboration, a trait that has arisen from a deep connection to their parents, who are jointly involved in many of their career and life decisions (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). They learn well together and prefer to share and construct knowledge through collaboration (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). The availability of instant communication technologies has allowed them to be in constant contact with friends, classmates, and colleagues, further developing their ability to collaborate and work well with others (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). This interconnected environment, along with the extraordinary involvement of their parents in

their social and academic development, has provided them with immediate and direct feedback about their performance as they have grown up. This close interaction with parents, teachers, and coaches has translated into a desire for continual and instant feedback from their supervisors at work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2010; Coley, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

### **Educated and Driven**

Generation Y is the most technically literate and educated generation to date, and these characteristics have led them to tightly couple education with success (Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Drill, 2011; Eisner, 2005). As a result many people in Generation Y put a high value on education and attribute their success in the workplace to their educational opportunities (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). They have high standards of achievement and believe that high performance should be rewarded (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Within industry, businesses accomplish their operational objectives by training their employees in teams with specific outcomes in mind (Wong & Wong, 2007). Members of Generation Y thrive in this type of environment, thus greater opportunity for retention exist where Generation Y workers experience opportunities for growth, have opportunities to engage in challenging and meaningful work, and are recognized for their contributions (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). This may indicate that employers who offer the opportunity for ongoing personal growth and life-long learning opportunities will be more successful in enticing and retaining Generation Y workers.

### **Plugged in at Work**

Members of Generation Y have grown up with technology more so than any other generation in history and as a result they are comfortable accessing information instantly

and as needed (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). They grew up being continually connected to digital information, entertainment, and their social contacts (Eisner, 2005). As a result of this comfort with technology, members of Generation Y have come to expect a work environment where technology is both current and functional (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2011). Members of Generation Y tend to construct knowledge as needed. Having been raised in an environment where information is easily accessible, they prefer to find information and develop an understanding of issues as needed (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Lancaster and Stillman (2010) described this phenomenon as “the end of the expert as we know it” (p. 211) because members of Generation Y are more likely to consult a wide variety of sources in order to develop their own understanding of a given topic or concept.

During the life span of Generation Y there have been major shifts in technology and globalization (Tulgan, 2009). These shifts have resulted in members of Generation Y becoming plugged into online communities that extend beyond the workplace or community and are global in scope (Tulgan, 2009). The possible implications for how this will affect economic and professional development in all sectors, including education, are not fully known. “Gen Yers are comfortable in this highly interconnected rapidly changing web of variables. They’ve never known the world any other way” (Tulgan, 2009, p. 7). Tulgan (2009) noted further that fast-paced changes in technology do not intimidate members of Generation Y; rather these changes allow them to feel more connected as a result more informed and capable.

## **Asserting Their View of the World**

Tapscott (2009) described Generation Y as the net generation because he believed that the internet has been the most influential factor on this generation of young professionals. His argument was predicated on the fact that members of Generation Y, as he described them, have unfettered access to online networks and communities.

Members of Generation Y, like other generations before them will have an impact on the culture of the society around them including their places of work (Tapscott, 2009). Members of Generation Y have been raised to be collaborators and are now entering the workplace expecting that their employers and supervisors will be willing to collaborate with them. With this expectation comes the belief that the work that they engage in will be meaningful and will be of benefit to society or the organization (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). This desire for self-actualization and the opportunity to exceed to so deeply ingrained that Lancaster and Stillman (2010) found that if Generation Y workers did not feel a sense of meaning in their careers that they would be willing to seek employment elsewhere, even if it meant a reduction in pay. They described meaningful work as a “must have” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010, p. 92) for members of Generation Y in selecting and remaining in a professional occupation. This is consistent with the eight generational norms, as described by Tapscott (2009) that members of Generation Y share, as they relate to employment:

- Freedom: to experiment with different options including where to work, when to work, and for whom to work.
- Customization: knowing what is expected and then deciding for themselves how they will go about achieving those goals.

- Scrutiny: researching the aims and practices of potential and actual employers.
- Integrity: expecting that organizations will be honest, transparent, mindful, and trustworthy.
- Collaboration: being connected to the larger community, having their insights and opinions counted, and working with others towards a common goal.
- Entertainment: expecting that their work will be intrinsically satisfying, personally fulfilling, and fun.
- Speed: expecting instant communication and continual and constant feedback.
- Innovation: “rejecting the traditional command-and-control hierarchy and devising work processes that encourage collaboration and creativity” (Tapscott, 2009, p. 95).

As these characteristics become more ingrained in the workforce employers will have to adapt to them in order to attract and retain the best talent from the Generation Y talent pool. The interconnected nature of the workplace and the workforce today will have an impact on the nature of work in both the private and public workforce.

**Dealing with adversity.** With the downturn in the global economy it has been fascinating to observe the reaction of today’s youth to the current political and economic challenges. Beginning with the election of Barak Obama, the rise of the Occupy movement, and the Quebec student protests members of Generation Y seem to be getting politically involved and may be leading the demand for greater equality, access to

education, and other social services. It may be that the current backlash against the current neo-liberal political and economic model that has been championed over the past decade represents an attempt by members of Generation Y to re-define the world according to their values, much as members of the Baby Boomer Generation did in their youth. Members of the Baby Boomer Generation were the first to have an extended childhood, in which they took the opportunity to develop a distinct youth culture (Tapscott, 2009). Members of Generation Y are emerging as the first globally connected generation and like their Baby Boomer parents are beginning to assert their values and expectations in a transformative way (Tapscott, 2009). The interconnected nature of youth culture today is having a global impact not only in Canada and the United States but also in traditionally less tolerant nations as well. The Arab Spring seems to have been fueled through social media and by youth, who like their North American counterparts, are demanding more equality, political influence, and acceptance. As these events continue to unfold, it will be fascinating to see how members of Generation Y around the globe redefine the world to reflect their values.

### **Generation Y in the Workforce**

Members of Generation Y as a whole are a complex group of young people who have a high degree of confidence in themselves and have high expectations of others in the workplace. While they can be perceived as demanding they are also innovative and creative. Harnessing these traits is essential for employers as this new generation moves into the workforce (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). They have been brought up expecting consistent feedback about their performance and function very well as part of a collaborative team that has purpose and relates to their interests (Eisner,

2005). Members of Generation Y are goal oriented and respond well to challenging assignments that result in observable outcomes (Shaffer, 2008). Yet members of Generation Y desire a stable work life balance and desire employment that allows for flexibility and the opportunity to be engaged in the broader community through volunteerism and social experiences (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Shaffer, 2008). Generation Y employees are global citizens and expect that their employers will demonstrate good corporate citizenship (Shaffer, 2008). Potential employers that will be most successful at attracting and retaining members of Generation Y will need to create environments that are reflective of Generation Y values and that respect their desire for continual training, feedback, opportunities for career advancement, and clear connections between their role and the organization's objectives (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

### **Generation Y Teachers**

It is important for employers and supervisors, or in the educational context, boards of education and school administrators to be aware of the cultural traits of Generation Y and to harness them in a productive way. Generation Y teachers view access to technology as an essential component in facilitating student learning (Coggshall, et al., 2011). They have grown up in the information age and have come to expect a work environment where technology is both current and functional (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2011). Because Generation Y teachers work and learn well in teams and have a desire for continual feedback they are more apt to seek out and engage in shared practice (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). They want frequent opportunities to observe other teachers and to be observed in order to receive feedback (Coggshall, et al., 2011). Generation Y teachers are more open to the idea of



rewarding teachers for their effectiveness in the classroom and the difficulty of their teaching assignment (Coggshall, et al., 2010). Many of them plan to make a career in education and as a result have a genuine interest in planning for the future and participating in the decision making process of the school in which they work (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Coggshall, et al., 2010; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

**The nature of teaching and motivation.** Pink (2009), following on the work of Deci and Ryan (2008), examined human motivation through Self Determination Theory. He discussed that humans have three fundamental needs: competence, autonomy and connection. “When those needs are satisfied, we’re motivated, productive and happy” (Pink, 2009, p. 72). Pink continued by encouraging managers and administrators to “create environments for our innate psychological needs to flourish” (p. 72). By contrast, many early service teachers must face the reality of difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, inadequate resources, isolation, conflict, and a reality shock concerning workload (Anhorn, 2008). In addition to this many new teachers are asked to take on the most challenging teaching assignments, while more experienced teachers have developed a hold on more straightforward classes (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). New teachers are often left to themselves once the school year has begun without much in the way of professional contact with other teachers during class hours (Anhorn, 2008). As a result new teachers may feel overwhelmed and alone. Anhorn (2008) commented that one way to address the problem of new teachers feeling overwhelmed is to ensure a reasonable period of mentorship and induction is provided as soon as a new teacher is employed. Creating induction programs that address the inherent loneliness that many new teachers feel when they enter the classroom can address these needs (Anhorn, 2008).

### **The Effect on School Divisions**

Coggshall et al. (2010) discussed two overarching themes is the way in which teachers perceived changes in policy that are designed to attract new teachers to the profession and to reduce attrition these factors are “hard factors” and “soft factors” (p.1). The “hard factors” relate directly to compensation and benefits while the “soft factors” relate to working conditions and the culture of the school (Coggshall, et al., 2010).

Coggshall et al. (2010) found that the “soft factors” relating to the retention of Generation Y teachers were influenced by generational characteristics and experiences. Divisions and schools that do not address the “soft factors” (Coggshall, et al., 2010) may face difficulty in the recruitment and retention of new teachers (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Darling-Hammond found that three of the four main factors that affect whether or not and when teachers will leave a school or the teaching profession altogether were in fact ‘soft factors’ including: “working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support in the early years” (p. 9). The final factor of job satisfaction results among new teachers was salary and by extension how teachers are paid, which Coggshall et al. (2010) defined as the “hard factors” (Darling-Hammond, 2003). When taken in conjunction with the characteristics of Generation Y, it may not be surprising that administrative support, access to current resources, and input into the local decision making process were listed as strong influences in teachers’ decisions to remain in their current position or to leave (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

**Less formal administrator supervision.** Members of Generation Y have received constant feedback from parents and have grown up in an era of instant communication (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coley, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). As a result

Generation Y teachers have come to expect continuous feedback from their administrators to find out how they are doing and how they can improve on a continual basis (Coggshall, et al., 2010; Coley, 2009). While this may seem like a daunting task from an administrator's perspective, it does underscore the importance of developing collaborative teams that can meet those needs rather than overwhelm any one individual. This desire for continual collaborative feedback means that principals will have to adopt a coaching role rather than a boss role when working with Generation Y teachers (Coley, 2009).

In contrast to the generations before them, Generation Y teachers see educational institutions as structured communities that are internally accountable for student learning. This belief can be connected to the expectation that they will work collaboratively with administrators to improve teaching and learning within their school communities (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2010). Comparatively, Baby Boomers wanted more freedom of expression within the classroom, and Generation X saw schools as a practical training ground for the workforce (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Coggshall et al. (2011) found that 75% of the Generation Y teachers they surveyed preferred having an administrator who frequently observed their classroom and gave specific feedback as opposed to annual or bi-annual formal observations that provided more general feedback. In contrast Generation X teachers were less likely to prefer this system of frequent feedback (70%) and Baby Boomers further less likely to prefer it (59%) (Coggshall, et al., 2011).

**Up-to-date and reliable technology.** Members of Generation Y are often described as technology natives. Generation Y teachers have grown up with the Internet

and communications technology giving them access to vast amounts of information that can be quickly accessed. They also have access to people including social and professional networks, many of which exist online (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). “Gen Y [sic] teachers also know viscerally how important it is for their students to understand and be able to use technology appropriately” (Coggshall, et al., 2011, p. 27). Generation Y teachers expect and demand that technology will be current and functional in their classrooms (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). This does not mean cutting edge, flashy, or sexy devices; rather these teachers demand that they and their students have access to high speed Internet, reliable computers, and useful software as needed. In general terms members of Generation Y are looking for technology to streamline their workplace performance rather than to have in-depth technological knowledge and training (Tulgan, 2009).

**Increased professional collaboration.** To retain Generation Y teachers, principals must offer the meaningful dialogue that these teachers have come to expect on a daily basis (Coley, 2009). In fact teachers of all generations desire collaboration as Coggshall et al. (2010) observed. Delegating leadership roles to more experienced teachers may provide increased opportunities for genuine collaboration on a regular basis, which Generation Y teachers will both appreciate and expect (Coley, 2009). This may serve to keep Generation Y teachers committed, which for them involves providing opportunities to continually develop their craft (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coley, 2009). While most teachers appreciate the benefits that collaboration offers, Generation Y teachers expect it (Coley, 2009). While this model may be difficult to achieve within a large staff, engaging master teachers can be an important part of the process of creating effective

professional learning environments that focus on goal oriented initiatives in which young teachers can collaborate with more experienced staff members to develop proficiencies in curriculum and academic standards (Wong & Wong, 2007).

Coley (2009) observed that it is common practice for schools to operate under the umbrella of improvement goals set out by outside agencies. In the Saskatchewan context some examples might include the Ministry of Education or a school division. Soliciting input from teachers to develop learning goals that are aligned with broader provincial or division goals and priorities serves to engage staff members in the professional development process. Behrstock and Clifford (2009) observed that engaging Generation Y employees as agents of change and encouraging them to contribute ideas to the decision-making process relating to their work environment is a workplace characteristic that members of Generation Y expect. Developing a mechanism to stimulate ideas from all staff members may lead to unexpected expertise and leadership in areas of professional development that are of value to the school community (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coley, 2009).

### **Induction and Retention**

When it comes to talent recruitment, private industry in North America is ahead of the public sector because industry requires the best talent to remain profitable and competitive. The public sector in general, and education specifically, tends to move more slowly in the recruitment and development of the best new talent. As a result many private sector managers and human resource departments have “focused sharply on understanding their Gen Y [sic] employees” (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Behrstock and Clifford (2009) examined strategies that private sector employers had developed to

attract and retain Generation Y workers and to improve the performance of their companies. Their analysis can be broken down into eight interconnected categories of strategies, employed by the private sector, that “may hold promise for school leaders hoping to recruit, support, and retain Gen Y [sic] teachers” (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009, p. 4):

- Competitive salaries. Coggshall et al. (2010) also found that increased reward for performance, responsibility, or difficulty of assignment was a factor that Generation Y teachers were more open to than older teachers.
- Programs that promote life-long learning and develop loyalty to an organization such as educational leaves and bursaries.
- Opportunities for self-directed movement and advancement within the organization and support for both personal and professional growth.
- Motivational working environments, which provide purposeful assignments that are clearly connected to the success of the organization.
- Organizational goals that are transparent and that support Generation Y values, individuality, and expressiveness.
- Flexibility in both work schedules and the culture of the workplace with respect to dress and environment.
- Availability and functionality of current technology.
- Clear and frequent communication that helps them to be more effective in their performance.

Educational leaders must begin to adopt some of these strategies not only to attract and retain the best talent but also to maximize that talent and in turn the impact of the

teachers on the performance of their job – improving student outcomes (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). There is strong evidence that teacher effectiveness increases sharply after the first few years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Keeping talented teachers long enough to reach their potential is essential for schools to be effective.

The first years of a teacher's career have an impact on their career development, the quality of their instruction, and how long they will ultimately remain in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wang, et al., 2008). With new teacher attrition rates from 30% - 50% within the first five years of teaching (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004) the need to focus on mentorship, induction and improving teacher morale during those first five years of a new teacher's career is essential.

### **Alone in the Classroom**

Teachers receive little or no professional support once they enter the work force (Wang, et al., 2008). Le Maistre and Pare (2010) compared first year teachers to other professions including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and social work, and found that teachers receive, comparatively, very little support from more experienced colleagues. For entry-level practitioners in these other professions there is a period of induction that includes a reduced workload and supervisory support by more experienced staff; there is also an expectation that the new practitioners will master the routine clientele and clinical duties before being assigned to more challenging cases (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). In contrast, in the teaching profession new teachers are expected to perform the same job as experienced teachers and often take on equal or greater extracurricular responsibilities when compared to their more experienced colleagues

(Anhorn, 2008; Wang, et al., 2008). The sink or swim mentality present within the teaching profession means that new teachers are often overwhelmed (Anhorn, 2008). This problem leads to teachers who feel that their jobs consume every other aspect of their lives, and who often do not feel as competent or effective in their practice as they would expect (Wang, et al., 2008).

Unlike most other professions in the North American economy, teaching, historically, has not had induction programs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). As a result, most new teachers are left alone in their classrooms to figure out for themselves which is the best way to perform their job (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). This is a troubling reality in the light of research that indicates that underprepared and unsupported teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003). A high proportion of teachers leave teaching due to dissatisfaction in the workplace and to find a better job (Ingersoll, 2003). Furthermore, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that “[t]he best and the brightest among newcomers appear to be the most likely to leave” (p. 31). They further stated that “[d]ecades of educational research have documented the presence of a sense of community and cohesion among families, teachers, and students is important for the success of schools” (p. 31). Generation Y has developed as a group the ability to work well with others and thrive on collaboration (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010; Wong & Wong, 2007). As a result induction programs that focus on one-on-one mentoring are less effective for Generation Y teachers than a collaborative model (Wong & Wong, 2007). Schools or divisions that do not have any induction programs and allow new teachers to work in isolation are setting those teachers up for failure (Wong & Wong,



2007). This strategy is in stark contrast to the desire of many new teachers to work in a collegial setting where they can receive constant feedback, think critically and solve problems that relate to their professional practice (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). In many ways the desire for collaboration and the recognition of its importance can be based on a constructionist view of knowledge, which sees understanding as a product of a complex system, constructed through experience and interactions rather than an accumulation of facts received from an external source (Barth, 2002).

**The importance of collaboration.** Members of Generation Y transition from busy families that function like a team in the home, school environments that support collaborative learning and team building in the classroom, highly organized and increasingly competitive sports programs, and social activities such as online gaming which often includes virtual teams competing against one another. As a result of these highly structured environments, members of Generation Y expect to continue operating in teams once they enter the workplace (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Lancaster and Stillman (2010) observed that members of Generation Y are stifled when isolated in the work place.

School administrators play a number of important roles within the school especially where new teachers are concerned, including culture builder, mentor relations coordinator, and instructional leader (Wood, 2005). The first role involves becoming the architect of a school culture that supports new teachers. The importance of this is highlighted by a study by Anderson and Iwanicki (1984) that examined the prevalence of burnout within the teaching profession. Anderson and Iwanicki (1984) conducted a comprehensive study comparing teacher self-actualization and burnout using, “the *Porter*

*Need Satisfaction Questionnaire, Maslach Burnout Inventory* and a subject background information section” (p.112). In this study teacher burnout was defined as “the perceived state of emotional exhaustion as well as negative, cynical attitudes and feelings toward students that can develop in teachers” (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984, p. 110). The study found that “younger teachers (20-34) reported significantly higher levels of frequency of emotional exhaustion than older teachers (45 and over)” (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984, p. 123). By creating opportunities for collaboration amongst colleagues, school administrators establish a climate of support for younger teachers to help them cope with the pressures of operating an effective classroom. Anderson and Iwanicki (1984) also found that, “self-actualization was the major predictor of perceived burnout” (p.130). This correlates with Pink (2009) who stated, in relation to human empowerment and motivation, “[h]uman beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another” (p. 73). The school administrator plays an important role in ensuring that the conditions are set for new teachers to develop their potential, find satisfaction in teaching, and achieve professional success (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984).

Developing greater competence is an essential element in creating a motivational environment (Pink, 2009). Following from the literature then, it makes sense that new teachers desire frequent constructive feedback from instructional leaders, especially principals, to develop strategies that will support their professional growth (Coggshall, et al., 2010). This has a twofold effect on improving teacher competence; the new teacher develops greater mastery of classroom practice based on feedback and at the same time becomes more confident which reduces anxiety and moves the teacher towards a greater

sense of self-actualization. When teachers go beyond simple discussion groups, whose goal is to resolve the logistics of new curriculum implementation or to develop lesson plans that they will then implement on their own, the traditional view of teaching, which typically is seen as an individual teacher responsible for one group of students for a fixed period of time, begins to change (Elmore, 1996).

### **The Importance of Mentorship**

Mentorship plays an important role in the induction of new teachers into the profession. Experienced teachers play an important role in helping new teachers to learn how to become more effective in the classroom (Wang, et al., 2008). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) found that effective induction programs must meet both the personal and professional needs of new teachers. Within this framework the role of the mentor was important in achieving both of these objectives. Their study found that mentors and administrators were viewed with particular importance when it came to supporting the needs of new teachers and that they aided in helping new teachers to feel a greater sense of belonging, competence, and comfort in their role.

Mentors, along with professional development and collaborative teams, also play an important role in supporting the professional needs of new teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Specifically the mentor's role in meeting the professional needs of new teachers centers on the expert advice that they can provide regarding curriculum and instruction (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

### **Schools as High-Performing Workplaces**

Part of designing a positive work environment in which teachers feel less isolated and more confident about their classroom practice includes increased and less formal

supervision (Coggshall, et al., 2010). Administrative and mentor feedback that is more collaborative and constructive is essential to making new teachers feel more effective in the classroom. “More specifically, offering feedback to Gen Y candidates is particularly useful, as this is a workplace condition that, on average, they value highly” (Coggshall, et al., 2010, p. 13). Teaching communities that support the empowerment of teachers to develop their own skills, take charge of their professional growth and to solve their own collective problems often demonstrate greater connection to the school and the community that it serves; teachers also demonstrate greater job satisfaction and levels of competence (Short, 1994). Short found that there were two significant problems that teachers in American schools faced: “teachers are isolated from colleagues in most of their work; and teachers have not been significantly involved in many of the decisions that affect the nature of their work, particularly in decisions made outside the classroom or the school” (p. 488). The literature suggests that in order for teachers to provide the best learning environment possible for their students they must first meet their own psychological needs and operate within a healthy learning community, which is focused on collegiality, mentorship, mastery and professional autonomy.

Efforts in varying jurisdictions and over many years to introduce merit pay as a tool for improving student outcomes have largely failed. This is due in part to the fact that education is not a process of production with static inputs and outputs; rather it is a human endeavor of individual development that depends greatly on individual factors (Levin & Naylor, 2007). While Coggshall et al. (2010) found that Generation Y teachers were more likely to support the concept of paying teachers differently based on their performance, they also found that that Generation Y teachers were more skeptical of the

ability of standardized testing to assess a teachers performance. Overall the Generation Y teachers in the study supported rewarding teachers as a product of the effort and time that they committed to teaching and to improving student achievement.

The literature demonstrates that schools that have high levels of teacher collaboration and strong professional learning communities (PLCs) produce higher levels of student achievement than other schools (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Vescio, et al., 2008). Coggshall et al. (2011) and Vescio et al. demonstrated in independent studies that teachers of all generations and career stage support increased collaboration and the use of PLCs as an instrument to improve students' learning outcomes.

### **The Imperative for Professional Learning Communities**

“At its core, the concept of a PLC rests on the premise of improving student learning by improving teaching practice” (Vescio, et al., 2008, p. 82). Professional learning Communities (PLCs) go beyond simply grouping teachers together, which in itself does not guarantee improved outcomes in student learning (Supovitz, 2002). Rather PLCs must be instructional communities that focus on student learning, while supporting teacher collaboration, professional autonomy, and continual professional learning (Supovitz, 2002; Vescio, et al., 2008). PLCs operate on the premise that organizations both possess important knowledge about practice and student learning and that they have the capacity to learn how to improve instructional practice and educational outcomes for students (Vescio, et al., 2008). The literature surrounding PLCs assumes that knowledge is developed through the day-to-day practice of teachers that this knowledge is best understood through critical reflection with colleagues, and that regular and active participation in PLCs will increase individual knowledge and improve classroom

practice. Which in turn will have a positive effect of student learning (Vescio, et al., 2008).

Within the context of current neoliberal paradigms regarding public spending present in Saskatchewan and beyond; policy makers, as Sir Ken Robinson (2011) stated, are looking to reform education in the same way that a struggling business might be reformed. Policy makers seem to “emphasize the need to get back to basics and focus on the core business, to face up to overseas competition and to raise standards, improve efficiency, return on investment and cost-effectiveness” (Robinson, 2011, p. 58). Rather when considering educational reform it may be more accurate to think of human development not as a linear process but rather one that is dynamic and by its very nature not standardized. “While industrial systems may be standardized, mechanistic and linear, human life simply is not” (Robinson, 2011). As such policy relating to educational reform should reflect the diversity of human development and the unique ways that students improve and develop. As described by Vescio, et al. (2008) PLCs do improve student learning outcomes, as a result they represent a more credible model around which to build effective educational reform. Investment in education should therefore, reflect the need for adequate time dedicated to professional collaboration, allowing teachers to develop learning plans for students within their schools.

Synthesizing the essential elements of a PLC as described by Newman et al. (1996) (as cited in Vescio et al., 2008) and DuFour (2004) three common traits emerge as essential for an effective PLC. The first is described by Vescio et al. (2008) as “shared values and norms” (p. 81) within the PLC relating to beliefs about student learning, educational priorities and the role of each of the communities stakeholders. The second

trait is the ability to ensure that students actually learn by focusing on results (DuFour, 2004). DuFour (2004) observed that “[s]chools and teachers typically suffer from the DRIP syndrome – Data Rich/Information Poor” (p. 10). Functional PLCs welcome data and use it to inform their decisions about improving student learning (DuFour, 2004). Focusing on student learning and results also fosters reflective dialogue about improving professional practice (Vescio, et al., 2008). The third trait, which DuFour (2004) described as “a culture of collaboration” (p. 8) is characterized by the de-privatization of teaching (Fullan, 2006; Vescio, et al., 2008). Within a PLC collaboration involves “a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice” (DuFour, 2004, p. 3). This process promotes group learning about curriculum, effective instruction and student performance (Vescio, et al., 2008).

Ideally PLCs function as a professional development model that can sustain teacher learning about educational practice and promote improved student learning outcomes (Vescio, et al., 2008). For PLCs to be effective their members must establish clear priorities and parameters for improving student outcomes, members must also have the autonomy to direct their own method of achieving those objectives (DuFour, 2003). PLCs function on the beliefs that: knowledge of practice exists within the experiences of the community’s members and that that knowledge is best understood through professional reflection with colleagues; building shared knowledge is a prerequisite for guiding the decisions of the community; and professional involvement in PLCs will increase professional knowledge and have a positive impact on student learning outcomes (DuFour, 2003; Vescio, et al., 2008).

The PLC model represents a shift away from the traditional model of education present in many North American schools today; the model of a single teacher isolated and independent in the classroom. The move towards PLCs and greater collaboration with the goal of improving student learning outcomes is one that many new and more experienced teachers value (Coggshall, et al., 2010; Vescio, et al., 2008). Teachers recognize that involvement in PLCs can improve the professional culture of a school because they promote greater collaboration, improve professional practice and focus teachers on student learning (Vescio, et al., 2008). Because of their professional focus, their collaborative approach and their goal of improving best practice PLCs can be an effective induction model that promotes the sharing of cultural norms, corporate knowledge and memory, and supportive environments.

### **PLCs and Their Connection to Generation Y**

Some of the characteristics of Generation Y teachers as outlined in previous sections include a desire to: collaborate with colleagues, receive timely and useful feedback from administrators and mentors to improve their practice, and have access to current and functional technologies that facilitate student learning (Coggshall, et al., 2011). Despite the desire of most Generation Y teachers to remain in the educational field for life (98%) and the desire of many to remain in the classroom for life (56%), many teachers who enter the profession grow frustrated and leave their position or the field within a few years (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Coggshall, et al., 2010). This is partially a result of teachers of all ages who are often left to sink or swim on their own in the implementation of new practice and technology while facing increasing student diversity and need (Anhorn, 2008; Coggshall, et al., 2011). There is a professional imperative to



increase collaboration within teaching staffs. Overall there is significant literature to support that schools in which there is a high degree of teacher collaboration also have improved student achievement outcomes (Coggshall, et al., 2011). In addition to this Generation Y teachers have an aptitude for collaboration. (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). And, as a result may benefit the most from the PLC model as a form of induction Generation Y teachers are predisposed to collaborative work and appreciate the experience of veteran teachers (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Generation Y teachers have a desire to learn from more experienced colleagues; but also expect that their experiences, perspectives, and ideas will be taken seriously (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

Strong PLC based induction programs have the potential to be an essential component for attracting and retaining the new generation of teachers now entering the workforce. The de-privatization of teaching is one of the “critical elements” that are present in effective PLCs (Fullan, 2006; Vescio, et al., 2008). This represents a common shift in the culture of education, as more Generation Y teachers enter the workforce there will be greater demand for collaboration and constant feedback (Coggshall, et al., 2010).

Many characteristics associated with Generation Y teachers correspond to the attributes that constitute effective PLCs. By taking advantage of this aptitude of Generation Y teachers to engage in PLCs, system reform is possible in a sustainable way as the culture of teaching moves from being less insular to more collaborative. This natural evolution can be supported through PLCs, which are designed to establish lasting new collaborative cultures within schools (Fullan, 2006).

PLCs provide a forum for personal expression and collegial learning to take place. They can also meet the need for regular and informal feedback, which is important when working with young teachers. Generation Y teachers want to know if they are performing well and how they can improve (Coggshall, et al., 2011). The ability to be effective in the classroom is extremely important to them (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Members of Generation Y have grown up in an environment of continual feedback from parents, teachers, and technology; as a result they have come to expect feedback in the workplace as well (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

In order for divisions and schools to attract and retain the best Generation Y teachers a paradigm shift that supports the cultural values of the generation may have to be in place. With this in mind, if PLCs are structured to allow for the characteristics of Generation Y it will be easier for new teachers to find support, experience professional growth and purpose, and become more competent as they enter the teaching profession. Furthermore the desire of Generation Y teachers for greater social contact within their profession is a product of the environment in which they have been brought up (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). An environment where, “they have come to value not only social learning opportunities but personal ones within the community context” (Pletka, 2007, p. 115). Generation Y has been raised in the Information Age in which marketing and social media have had a significant impact on their worldview. Pletka (2007) observed that Generation Y, more so than previous generations, sees learning as a process of social constructivism where they, “build their own understanding of the world collaboratively through a process of meaning making” (p. 115); Pletka went on to observe that marketing

by corporations such as Starbucks have capitalized on integrating this “successful learning environment” (p. 115) into their retail culture.

They (Starbucks) have combined an environment of social inclusion with personalization. Starbucks has enabled people within a community context to shape their experiences (e.g. creating their own drinks, tacking photographs of themselves on the community board) as customers by allowing them to express their unique interests, needs and characteristics. (Pletka, 2007, p. 115)

This is the culture of interaction that new teachers expect not only from their coffee shop but also from their places of work. Desire for continual engagement, growth, and challenge are hallmarks of Generation Y, which professional communities must support in order to get the best results of these new highly social and connected employees.

The need for PLCs to focus on student learning results in their ability to, “articulate their outcomes in terms of data that indicate changed teaching practices and improved student learning” (Vescio, et al., 2008, p. 82). This ability to produce and examine data may provide Generation Y teachers with an advantage in political environment that is increasing its focus on educational accountability. Fullan (2006) described shared norms and values along with mutual respect amongst its teachers a critical element of an effective PLC. PLCs supported by administrators that foster respect and collegiality, can serve as a tool to bring teachers with different generational perspectives together; allowing veteran teachers to share their expertise and experience in the classroom while learning new methods and techniques used by Generation Y teachers. Effective PLCs are built around the generation of knowledge and the development of best practice; they depend on the knowledge and expertise of all their members (Vescio, et al., 2008).

Improvement of student learning outcomes should be the goal of all educational system reforms. Self Determination Theory as illustrated by Deci and Ryan (2008) presupposes that in order to find purpose and meaning in their pursuits, “all humans need to feel competent, autonomous and related to others” (p. 15). If applied to teachers this ideal assumption about human nature is especially powerful when success is defined as high student achievement. Teachers, like all people, are eager to succeed in their professional pursuits, “because success itself is personally satisfying and rewarding” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 14). Extending this idea suggests that a learning community that is focused on a clear goal and supports the practice and individual interests of its members will generate positive results in student learning. This indeed is what Vescio et al. (2008) discovered in their analysis of PLCs. “All six studies reporting student learning outcomes indicated that an intense focus on student learning and achievement was the aspect of learning communities that impacted student learning” (Vescio, et al., 2008, p. 88). Developing supportive collaborative relationships that focus on mastery and professional engagement helps to drive student learning and rewards teachers of all generations.

### **Summary**

Members of Generation Y have a shared set of cultural characteristics. It is important that employers understand these characteristics if they expect to hire the best and brightest new employees of this new generation (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). Employers within the field of education are competing with private sector employers for Generation Y university graduates. Unfortunately many school divisions have been slow to adapt to this changing

demographic (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). While employers in other professional sectors have been developing strategies to manage recruit and retain members of Generation Y many school divisions continue to utilize traditional managerial, recruitment and retention procedures (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009).

While employers often see Generation Y employees as cocky, disrespectful of workplace hierarchies, and demanding, Generation Y employees also demonstrate characteristics which include: creativity, resourcefulness, self-confident, and a strong desire to engage in meaningful work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). Many members of Generation Y hope to work for managers they can trust and who lead by setting an admirable example for employees (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). In short Generation Y have less tolerance for institutional authority based on title or position but greater respect for earned or genuine authority (Tulgan, 2009). Rebore and Walmsley (2010) observed that as Generation Y employees have entered the workforce there has been a shift towards “human capital,” which they define as “the value one places on making a living, which is based on an individual’s work ethic, skills, and education” (p. 2). Generation Y employees, including teachers, tend to relate their economic stability and success to their level of education (Coggshall, et al., 2010; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). Other characteristics exhibited by Generation Y include a desire for a greater work life balance and an expectation for inclusiveness in the workplace (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). Perhaps two of the most important characteristics exhibited by members of Generation Y are the desire for collaboration along with the need for continual and instant feedback from supervisors at work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2010; Coley, 2009; Rebore &

Walmsley, 2010). Finally members of Generation Y have grown up with communications technology including cell phones and the Internet. As a result they demand that workplace technology is both current and functional (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009).

It is important for school divisions to understand the cultural traits of Generation Y in order to attract, retain, and effectively manage Generation Y teachers. Coggs et al. (2010) found that most Generation Y teachers plan to make a life-long career in education as a result they have an interest in participating in the decision making process of the schools in which they plan to work. However, there still remains a high rate of teacher attrition that is related to dissatisfaction in the workplace, which is affected by lack of administrative support, lack of input into decision making, and difficulty with student motivation and discipline (Ingersoll, 2003).

Fortunately there is already a substantial body of literature that supports the development of best practice within educational communities through the use of PLCs. Many of the main characteristics associated with Generation Y teachers correspond to the attributes of effective PLCs. As a result strong PLC based induction programs may have the potential to attract and retain more Generation Y teachers by providing greater collegial support, increased collaboration, and more input into local decision-making. The literature supports that effective PLCs focus on student learning, while supporting teacher collaboration, professional autonomy, and continual professional learning (Supovitz, 2002; Vescio, et al., 2008). PLCs have the potential improve the performance of all teachers within an educational community. This collective capacity building is essential for improving educational outcomes. Learning is a joint effort between teachers

and students on both daily and over the course of several years (Fullan, 2010).

Generation Y teachers appreciate the constant communication and collaboration (Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). These are traits that PLCs provide (Vescio, et al., 2008). It is also important for new teachers to enter professional communities that support their continued growth both as professionals and as individuals. The literature suggests that PLCs can support Generation Y teachers by helping them to define themselves according to the shared purpose of the learning community; to support collegial growth based on continual feedback and shared learning; to develop new teaching strategies that reflect members of Generation Y's interests in technology and socialization; and finally to support the development of individuals' interests and offer social and emotional support within the context of the school community. Ultimately PLCs support an interest in teaching excellence and student achievement, which is as natural as play or social networking for Generation Y teachers. Above all, a school whose culture champions instructional excellence, professional learning, and collegiality will have greater success in improving the learning outcomes of students (Vescio, et al., 2008). Teachers for their part need to remain committed to sharing knowledge, being active participants in the collegial nature of the school, and continually striving to improve their skills. Each teacher is responsible in their own way to promote their own psychological wellbeing and to positively influence the cultural wellbeing of the school.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the purpose for this study, the theoretical framework, method of study, and the potential significance of the study. The theoretical framework explores the rationale for qualitative research and the use of phenomenology. Both transcendental and hermeneutical aspects of phenomenology are explored. The method of study describes in detail the procedure that was used for conducting this research.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The data collected from the October 2011 survey that was conducted as part of the study entitled *The emerging teacher: Examining the development of teacher identity through cohort induction models* showed that there was significant difference between how teacher candidates responded to the question that gauged the importance placed on working as part of a collaborative team when compared with the responses of practicing interns. The purpose of this study was to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internship.

Phenomenology was chosen as the most appropriate method for conducting this study. This methodology is used to illuminate and relate a situation or behavior as they occurred within a given context (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers using this method attempt to examine and describe commonalities that manifest themselves as the participants experience a common phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Within phenomenology there are two schools of analysis which will both be employed in this two-part study. Transcendental phenomenology is, as Moustakas (1994) described, "comprised of naïve descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue" (p. 13). The second is hermeneutical phenomenology in which



“the researcher describes the structures of the experience based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participant’s account or story” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

The goal of phenomenological research, and by extension this study, is to provide a rich and contextualized description of the experiences within a specific setting; in this case Generation Y interns’ description of their experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internship (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Merriam (2009) identified that research is typically divided into two categories. Basic research which is used to learn more about a particular phenomenon and applied research which is used to improve practice in a particular field. Qualitative research can fall into either of these two categories. It allows for an examination of the lived experiences of participants, determines how meaning is developed by those participants within a cultural context, and seeks to uncover variables that contribute to a phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this vein “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative research also has the potential to make a difference, in terms of policy development and implementation, through developing greater insight and understanding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In other words, the goal of qualitative research from a pragmatic perspective is to improve practice by creating insight into the lives of the subjects (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) described qualitative researchers as arbiters or translators for those who experienced a phenomenon and those who want to better understand were used to examine what experiences were shared among interns in different schools regarding collaboration. Corbin and Strauss (2008) expressed that qualitative researchers “study worlds that interest them and that they otherwise might not have access to” (p. 13). By exploring the worlds that interns inhabited during their placement, a rich and detailed description of their experiences emerged, which shed light on the lower perceived value of collaboration by interns overall, as discovered in the October 2011 survey data. This phenomenological approach examined the common experience of the internship, how interns experienced collaboration, and the variable ways in which the internship experience affected the identity of the interns themselves. Phenomenology, as described by van Manen (1990), examines the world in which people live and questions the way that people experience that world.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

The philosophical assumption that I approached this study from is one of social constructivism. This view fits well with the phenomenological approach in that its goal is to “relay as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Researchers who operate from social constructivist worldview believe that meaning is negotiated socially and is based in historical and cultural norms, which individuals experience in their day-to-day lives (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Furthermore within a constructivist framework it is believed that “each person experiences and gives meaning to events in light of his or her own biography or experiences, according to

gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional background” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 10).

### **Phenomenological Examination**

Creswell (2007) defined a phenomenological study as one that examines the lived experiences of a group of participants in relation to a phenomena or concept and to uncover the shared meaning of those experiences. Moustakas (1994) examined the way in which people experienced an event in terms of intentionality which he defined as that which “directs consciousness *toward* something (real or imaginary, actual or nonexistent)” (p. 68). In this study the phenomena that was examined was the collaborative experience of Generation Y interns (those born between 1979 and 1997) enrolled in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan as they are inducted into the teacher workforce.

**Phenomenological perspectives.** Creswell (2007) described two approaches to phenomenological studies, transcendental and hermeneutical. Transcendental phenomenology is concerned with a rich yet dispassionate description of the experiences of those who experienced the phenomenon in question. This description is obtained through open ended and flexible questions that guide the dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutical phenomenology extends from the descriptions derived through the transcendental process and includes the researcher’s reflective analysis on the themes of these experiences and their interpretation of the participants experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) described the goal of hermeneutical phenomenology as providing a full interpretation of some aspect of life,

while remaining aware that no description can fully explore the complexities of a given phenomenon.

This study engaged both forms of phenomenological examination. The first of which was transcendental; in this phase I provided a contextualized description of the interns' experiences, the degree to which they experienced collaboration in the workplace, and what that collaboration entailed. The second phase was hermeneutical in which I asserted an interpretation of the findings of this study within the context of the current literature on Generation Y, professional collaboration and Professional Learning Communities.

***The transcendental perspective.*** Transcendental phenomenology is less interested in the interpretive process and focuses more on the “textual descriptions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34) of the lived experiences of the subjects (Creswell, 2007). To do this effectively requires the researcher to step back from the participants, suspend all personal biases, and examine the phenomenon from what Moustakas (1994) described as the “pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). This allows the researcher to examine the phenomenon for what it is and describe it in neutral terms (Moustakas, 1994).

Creswell (2007) described a process for researchers to follow when pursuing this type of methodology once a phenomenon has been identified for study. The first step is defined by Moustakas (1994) as “epoche” (p.33), which involves setting aside the researcher's own views before examining the experiences of the subjects. The researcher in essence takes on the role of a foreign anthropologist examining the existence of a group of people with whom no cultural norms or biases are shared. This can be accomplished through the provision of the researcher's own experiences with the

phenomenon and the subjects before the research is undertaken (Creswell, 2007).

Secondly, data is collected from several subjects who have directly experienced the phenomenon followed by an analysis of that data through the identification of common themes emerging from the descriptions of the phenomenon by the various subjects (Creswell, 2007). Finally a “textual description” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60) of what the participants experienced along with a “structural description” (p. 60) of the circumstances, conditions, and setting of the phenomenon is produced. The goal of the researcher is to produce a description of the phenomenon that is unfettered by prejudgment, presupposition, customs, beliefs, or prejudices (Moustakas, 1994).

*Bias and Epoche.* Moustakas’ (1994) description of epoche represents a meditative detachment from the phenomenon and community under examination. “In the Epoche, we set aside our prejudgment, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To conduct this research in an unbiased way I attempted to approach the phenomenon of collaboration within the internship from a neutral standpoint.

Thus the Epoche gives us an original vantage point, a clearing of mind, space, and time, a holding in abeyance of whatever colors the experience or directs us, anything whatever that has been put into our minds by science or society, or government, or other people, especially one’s parents, teachers, and authorities, but also one’s friends and enemies. “Epoche includes entering a pure internal place, as an open self, ready to embrace life in what it truly offers” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86).

Establishing epoche for this study involved developing a distant curiosity about the conditions surrounding new teacher induction and in particular the effect that the internship has on the aptitude and opportunity of new teachers to engage in professional

collaboration; especially, when one considers the data shared in the rationale for this research, which indicates a significant reduction in the value placed on collaboration by interns as compared to teacher candidates of the same generation. The results of this study suggest that there is significant reason to examine this result within the framework of the literature, which shows that teacher collaboration within a functional PLC can improve student learning outcomes (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Vescio, et al., 2008).

***The hermeneutical perspective.*** Hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of the subjects (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). Creswell (2007) described this as “interpreting the texts of life” (p. 59). The term hermeneutics can be traced to ancient Greece and specifically to the Greek messenger-god Hermes.

Significantly, Hermes is associated with the function of transmitting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp. The various forms of the word suggest the process of bringing a thing or situation from unintelligibility to understanding. The Greeks credited Hermes with the discovery of language and writing – the tools which human understanding employs to grasp meaning and to convey it to others (Palmer, 1969, p. 13).

In religious traditions, hermeneutics are the practice of interpreting holy texts into a sermon or *sermo verbum* that could be understood and taught (Palmer, 1969). Thus the role of the researcher who employs hermeneutical phenomenology is to interpret the experiences of the participants and distill them into essential themes that constitute the nature of these experiences (Palmer, 1969). Hermeneutical phenomenology implies an interpretive process. Van Manen (1990) described this sense of interpretation of the experiences as mediation between the participant and the reader. Based on the

transcendental description of collaboration during internship hermeneutics allows for a reflective analysis that relates the essence of the interns' experiences in terms of commonalities and themes that relate to the literature (Moustakas, 1994). The goal then of a hermeneutical description is to elucidate a lived experience where the meaning of that experience may be hidden (van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) specified that an effective hermeneutical description within phenomenology "is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience" (p. 27).

Within the current literature on Generation Y there is strong evidence to indicate that collaboration is a trait that is highly valued by people in this age bracket (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Cogshall, et al., 2010). And yet, there was an effect, according to the data in the October 2011 survey data, which is suppressing this inclination within the internship experience itself. That is why an interpretation of the interview results examining the interns' experience with collaboration was done in relation to the literature regarding Generation Y professionals and teachers in the workplace.

**Intentionality: Noema and Noesis.** Intentionality is the direction of consciousness that leads to the contemplation of situations both as a result of interpretations of the physical and metaphysical (Moustakas, 1994). This can be expressed in terms of noema and noesis. The noema or object-correlate relates to the way in which one responds to the world in terms of, but not limited to physical environment, elicited emotions, and conscious thoughts (Moustakas, 1994). The noesis or the subject-correlate relates to the way in which the noema is experienced, which is affected by the personal disposition of the person (Moustakas, 1994). The importance of considering the noema and noesis is to

understand that “consciousness is always consciousness of something and to designate what it is conscious of” (Lewis & Staehler, 2010, p. 23). That is, to ensure that bias is negated through understanding the intentionality of the participant.

### **Method of the Study**

The methodology that was used for this study followed a phenomenological approach as outlined in the sections above. The participants were purposely selected from post-internship students who had completed their internship in the preceding semester. Data were collected through a series of interviews with five participants who matched the requirements for this study.

### **Piloting the Research Protocol**

Prior to the beginning of the interviews the research protocol was piloted with four beginning teachers to ensure that the questions were understandable and that they shed light on the topics that they were intended to examine. This process also allowed me to practice my interviewing technique and to develop probing questions that gave greater clarity to the response of each subject.

### **Purposeful Sampling**

Merriam (2009) identified two types of population sampling used in research: probability sampling, which includes random sampling and non-probability sampling, which includes purposeful sampling. The logic of using non-probability sampling in qualitative research is based on the type of information that the researcher wants to uncover. Unlike quantitative researchers who hope to examine quantity and frequency, the qualitative researcher is more interested in discovering meaning by gaining insight, discovering what occurs, and the relationship linking occurrences (Merriam, 2009). With



these goals in mind the qualitative researcher must purposefully select a sample from which the most can be learned (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The subjects are chosen precisely because of their special experiences and understandings (Merriam, 2009).

“Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Merriam (2009) supported the use of purposefully selecting subjects who represent the average experience within the phenomenon.

Creswell (2007) recommended studying three to ten subjects within a phenomenological study built on a criterion based sampling strategy which involves ensuring that all subjects have experienced the phenomenon in question. Random purposeful sampling may also be a valid strategy for sampling if the “potential purposeful sample is too large” (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). This involves selecting a random sample from a pool of acceptable participants when the pool becomes too large (Creswell, 2007).

**Participant selection strategy.** For this study purposeful sampling was employed to select participants. Returning interns were approached in class after requesting access from instructing professors to sections consisting of mostly post internship students. Students were provided with a copy of a study information letter (see Appendix B) and invited to provide their e-mail address on a participant signup sheet (see Appendix B). E-mails were sent to each of the potential participants who had indicated an interest in participating in the study (see Appendix B). To entice students to participate in the study each participant received a gift card for McNally Robinson Booksellers in the amount of \$50.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasized that interviewees should be knowledgeable and experienced with regard to the phenomenon being examined. In this study the interviewees were chosen from those students who completed their internship and who are members of Generation Y. Potential participants were asked several screening questions via e-mail, which focused on the interns' experience with collaboration. Interns who are able to demonstrate interest in the research by responding thoughtfully to the questions and demonstrate that they have knowledge about the phenomenon of collaboration within the internship were selected. Participant selection was based on responses to the screening questions which allowed for interns to be selected based on their ability to "purposefully inform" (p. 125) the understanding of the focus of the research, interns' experiences with collaboration (Creswell, 2007). Efforts were also made to include as wide a variety as possible in terms of the internship site and grade levels taught.

Through the screening process five individuals were chosen for a series of in depth interviews. The interview protocol was constructed with the cultural characteristics of Generation Y in mind, and as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005) interviewees were then selected based on differences within these characteristics. To increase the credibility of the study, participants with different views on collaboration were chosen (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin (2005) proposed that in order to increase credibility, the number of interviewees is less important than ensuring that those who are interviewed represent differing points of view, whose understandings when brought together describe a complete picture.

## Data Collection

Merriam (2009) described qualitative interviewing as a “systematic activity” (p. 87) in which the researcher and subjects engage in an in-depth conversation that is guided by questions related to the phenomenon being explored. Within the field of qualitative research Merriam (2009) also identified three streams of interview strategies that are available to researchers: standardized (highly structured), semi-structured, and informal (unstructured). For the purpose of phenomenological research the semi-structured interview is most appropriate as it takes into account the noema and noesis of the participant by assuming “that individual respondents define the world in unique ways” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). For this study one-on-one interviewing was used. The interview design contained, as Creswell (2007) recommended, a protocol of “five open-ended questions” (p. 133). Within this protocol, follow up points were included to allow the interviewer to remain on topic while probing for deeper understanding from the participants’ responses. This aided in maintaining an unbiased approach when conducting the interview and was consistent with the recommendations of my committee. Creswell (2007) also cautioned that “for one-on-one interviewing, the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas” (p. 133). The pre-interview screening process that was used consisted of a pre-interview e-mail questionnaire, which allowed me to choose from the most verbose respondents and those who demonstrated a great depth of knowledge and interest in the topic of collaboration. Returning interns were approached in classes on the invitation of the instructors and were invited to participate in the study. I spoke to each class and outlined the research topic and methodology, students were provided with a study information letter (see Appendix B)

and invited to provide their e-mail on a study sign-up sheet (see Appendix B). E-mails were sent to each of the potential participants who had indicated an interest in participating in the study (see Appendix B). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Participant selection was based on their potential ability to describe in detail their understanding of professional collaboration and to be able to relate that understanding to the context of their internship experience. Participant selection was based on responses to the screening questions which allowed for interns to be selected based on their ability to “purposefully inform” (p. 125) the understanding of the focus of the research, interns’ experiences with collaboration (Creswell, 2007). Efforts were also made to include as wide a variety as possible in terms of the internship site and grade levels taught. No special consideration was given to responses that were exceptional in terms of setting or level of instruction. The participants selected represented those who had typical experiences with as much variation as possible given the small sample size (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological interviewing utilizes open ended questions based on a protocol that allows flexibility in the exact wording and order of the questions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). “The researcher attempts to uncover the essence of an individual’s experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 93) with a phenomenon. This involves conducting in-depth interviews, which focus on uncovering the meaning that individual experiences had for the participants (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Further the data can be internally validated through a process of triangulation, which aims to ensure that the data are reliable and reflects the entire picture (Merriam, 2009). This involves choosing participants that have different perspectives on the phenomenon and conducting

multiple interviews with each of the participants to ensure accuracy and to gain greater clarification of the experience after reflecting on the initial responses (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Within the context of this study, interns were interviewed upon the completion of their internship when they had returned to the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan for their final semester of study.

### **Data Analysis**

There is agreement within the literature that phenomenological data analysis begins with establishing the researcher's epoche by bracketing out and identifying one's own experience with the phenomenon in question, which is situated in Chapter One of this study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Upon completion of this step the researcher develops a strategy for coding the data and separating it into various themes by first identifying key statements that indicate how a participant experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The second step in this process is to "list each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). Third, relate and cluster these statements into common themes (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Then using these themes write a textural description of the phenomenon by writing "a description of what the participants in the study experienced" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) including direct quotations and examples. Following the textual description write a structural description "of how the experience happened" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). Finally the researcher merges these two descriptions to form "a textural-structural description of the meanings and essence of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). This process is part of ensuring that the data are given due consideration and provides for a full description of the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2007).

## **Ethical Considerations**

It is incumbent upon researchers to ensure the confidentiality of the participants of a study. Merriam (2009) noted that “actual ethical practice comes down to the individual researcher’s own values and ethics” (p. 230). To gain the trust and support of the interviewees a clear explanation of the study was provided to all participants, as recommended by Creswell (2007). Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and the names of third parties whose identity was shared through the interview process were removed to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. Special care was taken in reporting the data to ensure that details, which may identify the intern or a third party, were not included. Transcripts of the interviews were provided for review by the interviewee, at which point they had the opportunity to make changes if they believed that any of the information contained within the transcript might have compromised their anonymity or the anonymity of a connected third party. At any time prior to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study. Permission to proceed with this study was granted by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

**Data storage.** All of the digital information collected during this research, including audio files and interview transcripts were stored on my personal computer and were backed up using a USB drive and an external hard drive. All hard copy information such as interview notes and my research journal will be stored in a locked filing cabinet by Dr. Michelle Prytula at the College of Education for five years before being destroyed.

### **Potential Significance of Study**

This study contributes to the research done in the areas of professional collaboration, induction and retention, and the entrance of Generation Y into the teaching workforce. It addresses a gap in the literature that considers the integration of these three topics as they relate to the experiences of interns. This study also adds a new dimension to the current research as an in-depth study that utilizes both transcendental and hermeneutical approaches to phenomenology.

From a pragmatic perspective there may arise practical applications for this research. A pragmatic viewpoint implies that the researcher will focus on the outcomes of the research being conducted and the practical applications of the research to the research problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). There is potential for the outcomes of this research to lead to policy development at the division level and creation of a recruitment and retention strategy that reflects the cultural and professional needs of Generation Y teachers as they enter the workforce. Because the study focuses on interns from the College of Education, it also has implications for post-secondary institutions and the development of their teacher education programs.

### **Summary**

Conducting a phenomenological study presents the challenge of establishing an epoche and allowing the intentionality of the participant to define the data collected through the interview process. Creating a purposeful sample based on the willingness of post-internship students should be an achievable goal. This chapter outlined the theoretical framework that was utilized, which is based on transcendental and hermeneutical phenomenology. A rationale was provided for the need to employ both of

these methods to fully examine the phenomenon of collaboration during internship as experienced by Generation Y interns from the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

Neutrality was developed by establishing epoche and devising a methodological approach that takes into account my personal bias by identifying and bracketing my own experiences with collaboration, internship, and the teaching profession. Finally the methodological approach that was employed has been outlined including descriptions of how participants were invited and selected, along with the framework through which the data were collected and analyzed. Strategies for managing ethical considerations have also been included.



## **A TRANSCENDENTAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

As stated earlier the purpose of this study was to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internships by focusing on two questions:

1. How do select Generation Y interns experience collaboration?
2. What are those select Generation Y interns' perceptions of collaboration as a result of their experiences?

Following the initial piloting of the research protocol and having received permission to proceed from the Behavioural Ethics Research Board (see Appendix A), I approached various instructors of EADM 425 courses, which were comprised predominantly, of post internship students. Students were provided with a copy of a study information letter (see Appendix B) and invited to provide their e-mail address on a participant sign-up sheet (see Appendix B). E-mails were sent to each of the potential participants who had indicated an interest in participating in the study (see Appendix B). As stated in the Method of Study, purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Creswell (2007) referred to the importance of all participants to have experienced the phenomenon being examined. As such certain criterion were used to identify participants that would be able to inform the study (Creswell, 2007). The criterion included the potential participants' ability to describe in detail their understanding of professional collaboration and to be able to relate that understanding to the context of their internship experience. Selection was based on responses to the screening questions which allowed participants to be selected based on their ability to "purposefully inform" (p. 125) the understanding of the focus of the research (Creswell, 2007). Efforts were also made to

include as wide a variety as possible in terms of the internship site and grade levels taught. No special consideration was given to responses that were exceptional in terms of setting or school programming. The participants selected represented those who had typical experiences with as much variation possible given the small sample size (Creswell, 2007).

### **The Interns**

In total five participants were interviewed for this study. They were: Ryan, Monica, Isabelle, Lisa, and Zoe. Of the interns interviewed one was male and four were female. Three were in rural settings and two were in urban schools. Two interns taught in kindergarten to grade-twelve schools, two taught in elementary schools and one taught in a high school.

Selections from the transcripts of each interview are presented as part of the transcendental analysis of the data, to give clarity to the experiences that each intern had. In each case the names of individuals, schools, and programs have been changed or omitted to protect the anonymity of the participants. In some cases the interview transcripts included details of events or situations that might reveal the identity of the participant. Those details have been excluded from this study in order to protect their identity. The transcendental analysis presented in this chapter attempts to provide a textual description of the lived experiences of the participants during their internship (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). During the interviews I made an effort to maintain a neutral detachment from the experiences of the participants by referring to the interview questions and allowing the interviewee to finish their thoughts fully before moving on. When probing for more information I focused on uncovering the noema and noesis of the

experience being described by focusing on questions to illuminate either the object-correlate or the subject-correlate of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

## **Ryan**

Ryan interned in a rural community in a Kindergarten through grade-twelve school. He interned in a middle years classroom with a cooperating teacher who had approximately fifteen years of experience. Ryan had high expectations about his experience and hoped that it would help him to understand “about actually what goes on in a school.” Ryan expected that there would be a steep learning curve and felt underprepared in his depth of knowledge of the curriculums that he would be teaching. Ryan moved to the rural community in which he was placed for the duration of his internship and explained that this allowed him to be somewhat isolated and focus on his work.

Ryan was excited to become involved in the life of the community and was eager to engage in extracurricular activities including sports and arts programming. Ryan found that bringing his own personality and talents into the classroom helped to make his internship a rewarding experience. While he was frustrated by the lack of mentorship that he received from his cooperating teacher, he did find that the collaborative work that he engaged in with other teachers within the school was helpful and constructive; aiding in his development as a teacher.

Ryan expressed an eagerness to enter the teaching profession and to become involved in the life of a school in a meaningful way. Ryan revealed an understanding of the importance that being part of the community around a school has on his ability to connect with students. He also expressed his belief that bringing his unique set of talents

into the classroom aided in his ability to manage a classroom and facilitate student engagement.

### **Monica**

Monica came from a family of teachers and as a result felt that she had a better understanding of how much work would be involved in completing her internship. Monica taught in a rural community in a Kindergarten through grade-twelve school. She interned in a high school classroom and taught five classes within three subject areas. Monica understood that teaching in a rural setting would involve teaching classes that were outside of her teaching areas and she looked forward to teaching a diversity of subjects. Monica moved to the small town where she interned so that she could “get to know people.” She felt that being part of the community was an important aspect of her experience.

She found that the staff in the school, including the principal was “very supportive.” She did express that her most rewarding collaborative experiences were with other teachers including the school’s learning resource teacher as opposed to her cooperating teacher whom she described as disengaged in some situations and officious in others.

Monica explained that she found her involvement in extracurricular activities rewarding and that she particularly enjoyed volunteering in community events. She recognized that this was an important factor in developing good relationships with the students and their families. She explained that her internship was “a life changing experience” and that she was very excited to begin her career.

**Isabelle**

Isabelle interned at a small urban elementary school. She entered her internship with high expectations about her own performance and the relationship that she would have with her cooperating teacher. Initially Isabelle believed that she would have a close working relationship with her cooperating teacher, who she hoped would be a powerful role model for her, and that she would be an exceptional and successful teacher right away. She observed that the staff was very close due to the small size of the school but also observed that they worked, for the most part, in isolation from one another.

Isabelle was disillusioned by the reality of the classroom in which she interned as she soon discovered that her cooperating teacher was often absent from the classroom so that he could get other work done. Isabelle described not ever really working with her cooperating teacher in a meaningful way and found that she had to go into survival mode to keep up with her teaching load. Isabelle felt disheartened that she was not enjoying the relationship that she had expected and that as a result of being overwhelmed, she was not teaching to her potential. Isabelle described being isolated within the classroom as she began teaching independently from the first day of her internship.

Isabelle did develop several positive collaborative relationships with other staff members at the school where she was interning. She found these relationships to be very positive and described how they helped her to plan for and teach lessons to her students. She particularly valued the opportunity to co-teach with a group of other staff members and felt that this was a benefit to both her development as a teacher and to her students' learning.

Isabelle found great value in participating in extracurricular activities and appreciated the opportunity to build relationships with other staff and parents. She also recognized the importance of building personal relationships with parents and students outside the classroom.

Despite her difficulties in the classroom and with the relationship that Isabelle had with her cooperating teacher, she is excited to enter the profession and feels more reassured of her abilities. She described being passionate about teaching and student learning. Isabelle felt that she now has a more realistic expectation about her own performance and what she can accomplish in the classroom in terms of planning and teaching.

### **Lisa**

Lisa interned in a small rural elementary school. She described being both nervous and excited to begin her internship. Lisa was excited to being teaching but also nervous that she might not have a positive relationship with her cooperating teacher or the other teachers on staff. However, once she arrived in the community she found that she was welcomed and supported by everyone on staff and felt very comfortable. While Lisa did not live in the community in which she taught, she did take advantage of social opportunities to meet and connect with the other teachers on staff. As a result of the tight knit community into which she was welcomed, she felt that she was not seen as an intern but rather as a fellow teacher.

Lisa had a positive working relationship with her cooperating teacher along with other teachers on staff, which aided in her development especially when it came to planning. Lisa described herself as a perfectionist who would over plan for lessons and

sometimes have difficulty with classroom management as a result of her rigid lesson plans. Her cooperating teacher was a positive role model for her and helped her to become more flexible and more relaxed in her teaching. Lisa also described the close collaborative relationship that her cooperating teacher and she had in planning and teaching together. This relationship also provided support for Lisa when dealing with difficult situations when they arose.

Lisa took full advantage of opportunities to help with extracurricular activities and developed several strong relationships with fellow coworkers and parents. She described that due to the close knit nature of the community, extracurricular activities provided opportunity to develop friendships and better communication with members of the community including the parents of the students that she was teaching.

As a result of her internship, Lisa felt that she had a more realistic view of what teachers do and have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. She enjoyed her internship but also left with a feeling that teachers must sometimes make do without the resources that they need. She described that she felt that resources to assist with socioeconomic disparity and emotional needs were absent and that teachers were often not in a position to offer the level of support that students needed when dealing with serious problems.

### **Zoe**

Zoe interned in an urban collegiate with an ethnically diverse student population. Zoe entered her internship with the understanding that it would be a lot of work and discussed her nervousness about developing a positive working relationship with her cooperating teacher. Once she began her internship she found that while the workload was heavy she was able to manage it successfully and that after a couple of weeks of

interning that she felt comfortable in her role and that teaching was “something that [she] definitely wanted to do.”

While Zoe worked predominantly with her cooperating teacher, she did have the opportunity to work with other staff members in developing common assessment tools and found that this opportunity helped her to gauge what students ought to know and how to effectively assess them. Zoe described her cooperating teacher as officious and Zoe had hoped for a greater degree of independence in the classroom. Despite this experience, Zoe felt more confident about becoming a teacher at the end of her internship and felt more confident about her abilities to successfully manage a classroom.

Zoe took on a leadership role in one of the school’s extracurricular activities and found that this allowed her to develop important relationships with students outside the classroom. She felt that this allowed her to develop a greater understanding of who her students were and what challenges they face beyond the classroom.

Zoe felt reaffirmed in her desire to be a teacher as she ended her internship experience and described her desire to help students learn and to support them both in and out of the classroom. She also expressed her own desire to begin her career and to engage in further professional learning to improve her practice.

### **Themes Emerging From the Data**

The transcendental analysis was guided by the three pronged framework described by van Manen (1990) including the holistic reading approach, the selective reading approach, and the detailed reading approach. Once the themes emerged from the transcripts, I reviewed each one with my advisor to ensure its clarity and perspective. Initially I selectively read each transcript identifying common experiences relating to



each question in the interview. From this, initial themes based on common experiences emerged. The responses were highlighted in colors corresponding to each theme.

Following this step the transcripts were read using the detailed reading approach in which each sentence or cluster of sentences was reviewed while considering what each sentence revealed about the various themes. Finally each transcript was read using the holistic approach to ensure that the experiences of the interns were adequately reflected in the themes as they had developed. This was to ensure that “the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93) was fully expressed through the thematic analysis.

Using the process of phenomenological reduction the following seven themes emerged through the transcendental analysis that reflected the common experiences of the interns: (a) hopes and expectations; (b) sink or swim; (c) barriers to effectiveness; (d) opportunities for collaboration; (e) preparation and learning; (f) workload and experience; (g) passion and perspective.

### **Hopes and Expectations**

All of the interns recalled nervous anticipation of the internship experience. This was demonstrated both in terms of uncertainty about the communities they were about to enter and their capacity to be effective classroom teachers. The interns also described their expectations around their own performance. They were nervous about beginning a new stage in their career development and were unsure of their ability to be good classroom teachers. They each described either directly or through their reflection a picture of what a good teacher should look like. They also demonstrated an

understanding of the importance of the relationship with their co-operating teachers and the other teachers in the school.

Ryan described how his nervousness was a product of feeling unprepared to enter the classroom. “I was nervous just because, I don’t know I felt like I still didn’t know enough.” Ryan hoped that his co-operating teacher would mentor him and play a major role in helping him to learn more about how to be an effective teacher. “I was expecting to come in and learn a lot from my co-op.”

Similarly Isabelle described her expectations in terms of her desired relationship with her co-operating teacher.

I did really expect to have sort of a partnership, I guess the best description of it would be like a parental relationship where um my co-op teacher would be modeling for me, teaching me, and discussing things that have gone wrong for them and things that have gone well for them and kind of that education through modeling.

Both Ryan and Isabelle demonstrated a desire for a close working rapport with their co-operating teachers.

Monica expressed optimistic expectations about her own performance but some anxiety about how she would be viewed by her students. This was described also in terms of being a bit uncomfortable in the public eye. “[I felt] a little anxiety about meeting about 200 people. And the college telling us that we are going to be talked about at everyone’s supper tables for the next couple weeks.” She also described feeling excited to “be nearing the end of the program.” When asked about her expectations she said,

“My expectations were that I would be this amazing, insightful, inspiring, Robin Williams like teacher.

Like Monica, Isabelle also had a romanticized view of how her internship would unfold.

“I had these grand ideas of how I was going to be this revolutionary intern and I was going to be amazing and people were going to talk about all these things that I did and how great they were.”

Lisa described her nervousness in terms of concern for her own ability to teach effectively. “I was worried about my own performance. If I would be able to teach and worried about my ability to create lesson plans especially incorporating First Nations content.” She also expressed that while she expected to learn a great deal from her co-operating teacher she was also concerned that she may not have a positive relationship with this key person. “I was afraid that I wasn’t going to like my co-op, really afraid I wasn’t going to like my co-op. I have a pretty strong personality and sometimes it kind of clashes with other people.” In her experience, having the opportunity to meet the staff in advance of her internship along with a serendipitous social interaction with the principal of the school in the summer months preceding her internship alleviated many of these concerns. “I wasn’t really too concerned about things. Well especially because I met everybody right before I went.”

Zoe described her nervousness in relation to the “horror stories” she had heard from other interns. As with the other interns, she demonstrated an understanding of the importance of her relationship with the co-operating teacher. “I knew that it would be a

lot of work and I mean that in a sense I was prepared for it but, I feel like everyone's internship experience is so different depending on who your co-operating teacher is."

The data revealed that interns were interested in developing positive and collaborative relationships with their co-operating teachers as they began their internships. This was described both in terms of desiring a positive collegial relationship with the co-op and fear of conflict or having a poor relationship with the co-operating teacher.

### **Sink or Swim**

One of the common themes that emerged from the data was the experience of being left alone to manage a classroom or extracurricular activities in the school. This was in some instances viewed by the interns as a positive experience, where they were able to take some ownership of a classroom or a program. However, it was also viewed on occasion as a less desirable situation in which the intern was left to fend for his or herself. In two cases interns described feeling isolated and unsupported when dealing with conflict where the co-operating teacher was present as an observer.

Ryan, Monica and Isabelle were able to describe situations of being left alone to figure things out for themselves with the greatest clarity. Their experience indicated a picture of being abandoned by their co-operating teachers.

Isabelle described her experience working within her co-operating teacher's classroom. "I was working only in my co-op teacher's classroom um, he was um in the nicest terms possible... absent." Her understanding of why her co-operating teacher was missing from the classroom was that "this was an opportunity for him to get work done. So from day one I was left alone in the classroom to kind of fend for myself." Isabelle

described this feeling of loneliness as a scary situation, which led to a great deal of self-doubt. For Isabelle this also had an impact on how she perceived her development as a teacher and what she would be able to do in the classroom. She described a need to go into survival mode, fear of making mistakes, and fear of how her students and their parents would view her. She hoped to have more support and guidance from her co-operating teacher, who left her in a difficult situation when it came to her development.

I kinda assumed it would be like, that kind of modeling the way and showing the way, it was not like that at all! You know, I would ask for advice and I would ask for observations, I would ask for him to observe my teaching and it was like pulling teeth. And I just... I was a little bit sad about it.

Monica described a desire to have more time to conference with her co-operating teacher who was often unavailable outside of school day hours. "I kinda wished that we would have had that time when students weren't there... I wish kinda that we would have been able to collaborate more... I just kind of dealt with it I guess. I did a lot of just independent [work]... But, I don't think we ever really worked on anything together."

While Ryan did not experience the same level of abandonment as did Isabelle, he described frustration in terms of the lack of support and collaboration that his co-operating teacher was willing to provide in lesson and unit planning.

I put all my time and effort into opening up that curriculum and really unpacking it and seeing what I could all do with it and I felt like when [my co-op] first started teaching she must have come up with her plan and that's what she kinda had been running with... she did have her unit plans, she was planned like, she had planned

at some point. But they weren't up to date with current curriculum stuff and some of the lessons were kind of irrelevant.

When it came to planning for instruction Ryan said "I did have to do a lot of it on my own because I didn't have her... I didn't feel that I could learn much from her in terms of [planning]." Despite having expectations of learning from his co-operating teacher, Ryan felt that she lived up to some of the negative stereotypes of practicing teachers that he had hoped not to see.

I uh kinda felt it just lived up to all those... all those things that you hear outside of the college about teachers not really pulling their weight... I was kinda like ya. I don't know you just hear a lot of things around the college, [teachers] who kinda just write it off after they get a job and they stop doing their due diligence when it comes to planning and, and uh I kinda saw that as an example of it.

The examples he provided were in contrast to his expectations of a positive collaborative relationship.

Ryan provided two examples that he felt supported his perceptions. The first example was based on an experience in which he and his co-operating teacher co-created a unit for instruction.

We took one of her units and we pulled out pieces of it for her part and then I just created my own on my own time and put it with it... she was there to support me but, almost because I had such high standards... I almost didn't want her to be there with me because I didn't want to make her feel like she was a bad teacher.

The second example that Ryan described involved the development of a common assessment of students' listening skills. In this example a group of teachers from across

the division met four times throughout the year to focus on different learning outcomes within their individual classrooms:

They met so infrequently... it wasn't necessarily just the people involved in mine it was also the fact that when we met four times in a year it doesn't cut it, I don't think. Um, and especially not four times a year for four hours, like I think it would be better placed if it was more frequently less lengthy... Anyways, uh so each time they met they picked like an outcome to tackle, one that they said they were having problems with assessing. So like I said we tackled uh listening skills one, um and we came up with an assignment. I don't think it was the greatest assignment; we came up with an assignment that we were all going to give to our students. The next time we were going to come back and see what the results were. And that was even the worst part, because we came back and everybody was like oh you know... it was shit. [The problem was] we took an assignment completely out of context with our units and just plugged it in and it had nothing to do with what the kids are learning... it can't work like that, you need to find where it fits into um not just the curriculum but into a certain unit in the curriculum and address it at different times and what's the point of meeting in September coming up with an assignment, doing it the next day, it bombs and then we wait two more month to meet and talk about it?

Ryan was most frustrated by the way the group's collaborative objective was set up. He found that the assignment that they had developed was effective when adapted to the context of the classroom in which it was taught and to the current unit of instruction. Ryan re-worked the assignment into one that was based on formative assessment

practices, allowing students multiple opportunities to receive feedback and to develop the skills that the assignment was designed to assess.

I thought it worked really well... most students caught onto what I meant... what's the author's purpose? ... And that is straight out of the curriculum, that's what they want, they want author's intent... I thought it was really, it was a good assignment, if put into the right context but to just give this assignment and to say ok what's the authors purpose? ... I guess the mindset of the people [in the group] was that the students should already know what purpose was but, that's neither here nor there, they either do or they don't, and if they don't you still have to teach to them you know? You can't just fail them and say, "Here's your zero."

These two examples illustrated Ryan's overall frustration with the quality of most of the collaborative relationships he shared during his internship.

In contrast to Ryan's desire to learn from his cooperating teacher, he was dismayed by his observation of the level of expertise that his co-operating teacher had in understanding the curriculum and what he was able to take away from his internship in terms of practical ideas and resources. "She raved on about how much I knew about the curriculum... I felt I didn't know enough about the curriculum and a teacher for fifteen years says that I know more than... more than I should kinda thing." He also commented that:

I gave her everything that I did, like I gave her all my units... and videos and everything that I had found and she basically put it in, she had two brand new units that she was gonna teach and I just felt like I didn't get anything.



Despite feeling under-prepared in terms of his understanding of the curriculum, he found that he was better prepared than some of the experienced teachers with whom he worked.

Monica experienced being left in charge of a resource classroom when substitute teachers were unavailable. She enjoyed the opportunity to be in a leadership role in the classroom and that she took on this role even when a substitute teacher was present. “I kinda ended up running the room at some points I guess. Which was kinda nice, because I felt this kinda responsibility.”

Lisa who overall had the most positive working relationship with her co-operating teacher identified that her experience was unique and that her understanding of other interns’ experiences were that they felt a sense of abandonment during their internship:

I know a lot of my friends were not as fortunate as I was. It was really a lone struggle where my internship really wasn’t a lone struggle... I feel like everybody carried me through it. Like really. Um, especially when I talk to other people, who didn’t have such a positive experience.

On a number of occasions during the interview Lisa attributed her fortune to the small size and the personable nature of the staff with whom she worked.

The interns’ experiences with abandonment and lack of professional support do seem to be a prevalent theme within the data. It is also a theme that is not limited to only classroom practice. Interns also indicated that they felt unsupported and isolated when they were involved in extracurricular programs or when dealing with a difficult situation.

## **Extracurricular Roles**

The data revealed that in several cases interns were asked to take on responsibilities beyond what might be normally expected when it came to participating in extracurricular activities. Each of the interns that were interviewed was involved in the extracurricular programming provided by the school in which they were placed. Without exception each intern recognized the inherent value that extracurricular programming offered in terms of building relationships with students, parents, and staff members.

Three of the interns spoke directly to the value of developing relationships with students:

Monica said, “I really enjoyed like just during the day... just [students] coming up to me and... talking in the hallway and, and knowing their names in the hallway made, made the day better I guess.”

Lisa explained, “[extracurricular] gave me the opportunity to connect with children outside of the classroom which I think is extremely important. I did that on the playgrounds too.”

Zoe expressed it saying, “building those relationships with the students on a different level outside the classroom I think is really important and getting to know them more as people rather than just pupils.”

Each of these interns expressed directly the value of building relationships with students outside the classroom. They along with Ryan and Isabelle described how developing relationships with students gave the job of teaching more meaning and made it more personal.

Beyond simply developing relationships with students, another theme that emerged from the data was the value that interns saw in their extracurricular experiences when it came to developing relationships within the school community both with staff members and parents. Monica and Lisa spoke to this directly. Monica said that working with another teacher while coaching was “awesome” and that they developed a “great relationship” as a result. Lisa described how becoming involved with other staff members was a rewarding experience. She described that, “working with the staff outside of the school hours was also great.” Both interns expressed that developing these relationships was important in the development of their in school support networks.

Lisa described the importance of developing personal relationships with the staff through social opportunities that came through the school. “One of the staff members regularly [hosted]... kinda like a staff night where we would all go over and hang out.” She also expressed how developing personal relationships with the staff added to the level of support that she felt:

We would get together in the morning in the staff room... we weren’t just talking about school stuff right, we were actually talking about our feelings [and] our situations at home... I think for other staff members to know your situation kinda enables them to better support you.

She continued to describe the importance of interacting with staff members at extracurricular events “extracurricular was huge because you plan with other members of the staff.” Overall Lisa had a very positive and supportive experience, which was intensified by her inclusion in a relatively small and tight knit staff. She expressed that it

was her desire to be part of a smaller community for these reasons and that she viewed smaller communities as more inclusive and helpful.

Isabelle enjoyed being able to interact with families in the community. “It was nice to see the families and it was nice to see people in a more natural environment.” She also expressed the value of being able to demonstrate herself as a caring individual within the school. She felt that this was an opportunity to develop her public image as a caring teacher. Similarly Ryan and Monica described finding personal value in being involved in community events and volunteered their time to various community functions.

Lisa described the greatest sense of developing a lasting relationship with the community that the school served and explained that she “really got attached” to the community. She described becoming “great friends” with a parent of two of the students that she was coaching. She felt that spending time together during extracurricular events led to conversations with parents that helped to strengthen the communication between her and the parents regarding the academic performance of their students. She observed that, “by the time I had parent teacher interviews [I] knew all the parents... of my [students]” which put her more at ease. She went on to describe how she felt that being involved in the community through extracurricular activities made her more approachable as a teacher.

The interns saw the value of extracurricular programming as it helped them to forge and maintain relationships. In some situations the interns also experienced the added pressures and responsibilities that accompany extracurricular programming. Three interns indicated that their duties included providing some of the extracurricular programming. This responsibility was met with mixed feelings on the part of the interns

who expressed that in some instances the responsibility of leadership provided them with the opportunity to exercise their independence; on other occasions the interns felt that duties had been unfairly offloaded.

Monica expressed “I kinda felt like the coach of the team and so that was a little stressful at times.” She went on to explain that some of the main organizational responsibilities of the coach had also fallen on her shoulders “a bit too much.” Monica indicated that the added workload did add to her stress level.

Ryan described situations in which he took on leadership roles in extracurricular programming both with assistance and in isolation from other staff. He took on a head-coaching role where he indicated that he did have an assistant to provide support. He also led artistic programming in the school. He explained that:

there was nobody watching over me it was just like you know take these kids... and do what you gotta do, so the fact that I, the fact that they really just handed me all the responsibility and said go with it... that was um above, above and beyond my expectations of what I was gonna get to do.

Zoe also indicated that she assumed responsibility for a school team “the organization part, like figuring out what to do, who’s gonna be there, getting the girls to their [practice] that was a little bit stressful at times.” In this situation Zoe described how the extracurricular activities that she was leading ultimately failed as a result of the socio-economic conditions of the community and the obstacles that resulted from this.

### **Barriers to Effectiveness**

As described in the review of the literature, members of Generation Y are creative, innovative, and self-confident. As a result they have a strong desire to engage in

meaningful work. All five of the interns described experiences in which they felt that their effectiveness was being compromised by barriers that they encountered or perceived in their internship experience. Three of the interns described the barriers that they encountered as being put in place by their co-operating teachers, through their actions or intentions. Two of the interns described barriers to their effectiveness as systemic barriers that all teachers face.

### **Officious Cooperating Teachers**

Monica described situations in which her ideas were “shut down” before she had an opportunity to test them in the classroom. She described her co-operating teacher as “extremely opinionated.” To the point of shutting down lessons that she had planned to teach to the class,

He just flat out [said] “this will not work,” and maybe they wouldn’t but I kinda wish I would have just been able to do it and so what if I fall on my butt. I guess that was a bit disappointing.

Monica was able to provide a specific example of this type of interference that impacted one of the lessons that was observed by the college supervisor. “I thought I had made this great lesson plan.” When she shared the lesson with her co-operating teacher at the preconference he expressed that this lesson “won’t work” and instructed her to change the lesson to one that he had already developed for the topic of the class. Monica described feeling “upset” by the events surrounding this lesson. Her description indicated that she was frustrated and somewhat embarrassed during the observation of this particular lesson. She felt that the lesson did not go well and that she had to improvise instead of teaching the lesson that she had planned.

Similarly Zoe described her co-operating teacher as periodically overbearing. “Sometimes I felt like I didn’t have the full opportunity to be the teacher of the classroom.” She described that not being able to exercise autonomy within the classroom affected her self-confidence, “I know sometimes like, that worked on my self-confidence a bit because I didn’t know if she could... If she thought I was doing a good enough job.” Zoe explained that as an intern she was not allowed to enter marks into the school’s data system or to contact parents. She also discussed the impact that negative feedback had on her self-confidence during her internship.

The way that she gave me feedback was that she didn’t, unless it was negative, so... it started to work on my self-confidence ‘cause I was thinking well I don’t really know when I’m doing something, when I’m doing a good job ‘cause I’ve never done this before so in the eyes of another teacher I like, it would have been nice to be reaffirmed when I was doing something well and that happened when my internship facilitator came in, she was really good for that. So, I knew that I was doing a good job and then I just ahh... it was really difficult to only hear negative things and sometimes it felt like the things that she was saying just, it wasn’t even worth it.

Zoe described that often the negative feedback that she received had little to do with the lesson plan or her ability to teach the lesson. Rather she felt that the feedback was often on trivial things that related more to teaching style rather than effectiveness.

Zoe also described experiences where her co-operating teacher would interrupt lessons in an inappropriate way. She explained, “Sometimes during a lesson she would jump in and just kind of takeover.” The intern explained that while in some situations

this intervention was welcomed, it was often done in a way that undermined her confidence:

If I needed her help on the background information I was thankful because I didn't have... that life experience. But, for things that I don't think are a very big deal, I don't think will affect the kids' educational experience it just kind of annoyed me a little bit and it made me feel belittled.

She described one example of this in detail where the co-operating teacher interrupted the class to correct what she saw as an organizational issue. Zoe described feeling that her classroom authority had been undermined by this action and continued by saying "I just felt demeaned you know?"

Overall Monica and Zoe expressed that they experienced frustration in the lack of opportunity to learn through doing and to make mistakes from time to time. Zoe expressed this by saying, "I should have been able to struggle through it myself because I think I would have learned more that way." Both of these interns expressed frustration by what they viewed as micro-management. Both interns demonstrated a desire to experiment, make mistakes from time to time, and to learn through trial and error.

Isabelle was placed in a faith-based school; she shared the faith of the school and felt comfortable expressing her faith. "I have always felt very comfortable in my faith and then to go into a school and my co-op teacher was very hard on my faith and about my commitment to my faith." Isabelle found her co-operating teachers' concern about her religious faith confusing as it became the main focus of his feedback instead of the quality of her teaching. As a result she pushed away from her co-operating teacher in terms of extracurricular interactions. This overarching concern for her commitment to



her faith exacerbated the feelings of abandonment she felt in the classroom. This conflict came to a head when the co-operating teacher was teaching a lesson in which the moral values of the religious community were expressed in an absolute and non-inclusive way. Isabelle was horrified that this message was being taught to students and feared that some of them may be negatively affected by the lesson. Isabelle was very emotional and on the verge of tears as she expressed her belief that “the world is more beautiful when people are diverse. Right? And I think that... it’s so sad when people are squashed you know for something that they believe [that is] against the norm.” This experience along with the sense of abandonment that Isabelle felt led to her feeling disillusioned about the role that teachers play in schools and how they support diversity and inclusion in their classrooms. Despite these experiences she still had a high expectation to work with teachers who are willing to be supportive of each other and is reaffirmed in her belief that teachers should support the development of each student’s sense of identity.

### **Public Support from Cooperating Teachers**

Within the data there were two instances where interns felt unsupported when dealing with a conflict situation. In each of these situations the co-operating teachers were present and in a position to offer support. These situations led to frustration by the interns and a loss of respect for the co-operating teachers. While these situations were not the norm and were experienced by only two of the interns they are worth including as they shed light on the level of support that the interns received and were significant parts of the experience of each individual intern.

Ryan described an experience in which the staff was attempting to develop inclusive programming for two students with learning exceptionalities. Ryan proposed a

practical work skills program that would operate outside of the classroom for part of one period each day. The conflict arose when another member of the staff accused Ryan of excluding them from his classroom:

That was not my intention... I'm like it's fifteen minutes [per day]... it's not even always my class... the amount of skills that they would learn outside in this program like time management; social skills, they get to interact with every class in the school on a daily basis, which is what inclusion is all about, so... But nobody stood up for me and nobody said anything... so I just kinda backed down and didn't feel like I was in any position to say anything against her word and it was a pretty crappy feeling 'cause I, I honestly... I was discouraged.

When Ryan reflected on the situation with his co-op his frustration was exacerbated by the fact that his co-operating teacher supported his idea but was not willing to defend it in front of the staff.

I did find out that she agreed with me and I was kinda like well "why didn't you say anything?"

And uh, you know and she just said, "Well sometimes its better just to keep your mouth shut because some people are so strong headed"...

I figured that probably was the mindset of most people. Like, "I just don't want to deal with this."

This experience was again in contrast to the high level of expectation that Ryan had when it came to his view of how teachers should work together to support their students.

Isabelle had a conflict with a parent when she, along with her co-operating teacher, scolded a student for not completing his work and cautioned him that a failure to complete assignments may lead to a failing grade.

The next day a parent came in waiting for me and she yelled at me because I wasn't supporting her son and that I should never say those kind of things to her son because um, I don't know how they affect her son and how that translates into his confidence and if I'm going to be a teacher I should learn how to support her son no matter what.

Isabelle explained that her co-operating teacher was present during the exchange with the parent, "He was there for the entire conversation between the mom and I the next morning and... he didn't say anything during the whole conversation... he really should have stepped in there... he really should have defended me a little." As with Ryan, Isabelle's co-operating teacher remained silent during the confrontation and in the end expressed disbelief at the behavior of the parent. Isabelle went on to observe:

I think it goes back to that assumption about teaching where a lot of teachers just want to be safe and they don't want to upset parents. And I do believe that's why my co-op never said anything to that parent or never confronted that parent about it because they don't want to create that nastiness that un-comfortableness.

Isabelle expressed dismay at the reaction of the parent and shared her belief that teachers should work with parents in the best interest of the child.

Both Ryan and Isabelle expressed that their chief concern when conflict arose was to do what was in the best interest of the student. Both interns were frustrated that the conflicts arose when they tried to do what was in the best interest of the students that they

were working with. These feelings were furthered by the perceived lack of will on the part of their co-operating teachers to support them in the conflict. The interns took away from these situations an observation of a culture of compliance that they saw in each of their respective schools. They observed that for their teachers it was better to remain silent than to pursue a course of action that would resolve the conflict and be in the best interest of their students.

### **Systemic Barriers**

Ryan and Lisa described the barriers that they faced as systemic barriers that both frustrated and discouraged them. Lisa, who described the most positive internship experience, shared:

Right after my internship I was not excited about teaching anymore um, because of the system mostly. I felt that if you really want to help children and be there for children, schools [are] maybe not the best place because there is not enough support for teachers.

This sentiment was a result of her experience working with students who were suffering from abuse, from the trauma associated with the loss of a parent, and who came from lower socio-economic families that were not able to provide adequate food for their children. Lisa was frustrated by the lack of ability of the system, as she saw it, to intervene in a timely way to support the needs of these students. After reflecting on the challenges that she faced during her internship she believed that as a teacher her role should be to try and change the system where she sees it as dysfunctional. “On the other hand it was also motivating because now I can be in that point where I can be like ok, there are these problems in the system, do I want to change it?” She expressed her desire

to help students in various aspects of their development and to challenge the system when it does not meet her needs.

Am I going to focus on changing that or am I going to focus on teaching kids their ABC's and to me I didn't really become a teacher to teach kids their ABC's I'm more interested in helping kids become holistic individuals you know. Who are socially, emotionally, and intellectually healthy not just intellectually smart.

Ryan also expressed the sentiment, of wanting to effect change both at the school level and at an institutional level.

Ryan demonstrated an understanding that to effect changes at the school level he would have to take ownership of a problem and become an advocate for the change he seeks. "I'm probably gonna have to make my voice heard if I want to actually change anything." Despite not wanting to be seen as "that guy" who is trying to affect change to quickly, Ryan expressed that as his confidence was increasing through increased experience and greater networking, "those fears of being looked like as that guy probably will kind of disappear, probably... [and] I'll start... making changes that I think are important." Ryan and Isabelle both described increased confidence in their ability to play leadership roles in their schools and to be agents of positive change.

### **Opportunities for Collaboration**

During the interview process the interns identified various degrees of professional collaboration and had a variety of perceptions regarding the effectiveness of each type of collaborative experience. Their experiences ranged from low-level collaboration such as resource sharing, to dialogue about resource and lesson development with teachers, and

higher-level collaboration such as co-teaching and unit development with specific learning outcomes as the focus of the work.

### **Resource Sharing**

The data revealed that as a result of their experiences, interns identified collaboration as resource sharing. The most beneficial collaboration was described as resource sharing coupled with discussion about the effectiveness of the resources and the best way to implement them. Ryan described his desire for resource sharing to be a major part of any collaborative enterprise:

The biggest thing that I look for in a collaborative situation is where they can, you know give me ideas back... there's examples of it happening in the college all the time you know somebody says like, "oh I tried this assignment" and I'm like, "oh that's genius" and I wrote it down.

He continued to describe the importance of learning practical strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.

I'm a very practical person so I'm not looking for overarching ideas; I'm looking for actual ways I can use to demonstrate. Or another angle is resources, you know what are some good stories you found that help address this theme or stuff like that. So very practical things that I can actually use, that's what I'm always kinda looking for in any kind of collaboration.

Ryan expressed that his interactions with his fellow interns when he returned to the college were also enriched by the exchange of ideas and resources that others had used during their internship.

When speaking about the ways in which she collaborated with other teachers, Monica described her co-operating teacher's willingness to share resources. "My co-op basically turned all of his resources over to me and any subject that I needed he would be like... if you want to use my material... here it is." Monica described herself as pleasantly surprised by the willingness of teachers to share their resources and described her eagerness to work with other teachers in terms of resource development:

I was kind of skeptical of uh I guess teachers being territorial of their resources, and I didn't get that at all from anyone in my school. So I guess that was kind of exciting and it made me want to share my things that have worked for me and so I guess I am excited to work with all the teachers 'cause there is so many resources out there. Yes... which is kind of overwhelming you know it, it's like oh I wish I would have found this resource instead but before but... next year right.

The skepticism that Monica described at the willingness of teachers to share their resources was also expressed by Lisa who feared having to develop or find all the resources that she would need to conduct her classroom instruction.

Lisa was surprised and relieved to have been approached by the school's Teacher Librarian who offered to provide her with resources for the various units that she was teaching.

I walked by her office and she was like, "oh, what are you teaching right now?" ... She's like, "you know what I have these wonderful videos for you come book this out." ... I'm like "oh, I can go to her for every single little thing that I might need resources for." And I did! And she was always ready and happy to help me and I don't know she's such a lovely person, which is funny 'cause at the beginning I

never thought that, that was the job of the librarian really to provide you with resources but then she explained it to me, she's like, "ya, I'm the librarian, I don't just give kids books I can give you books if you need it as well." So ya, it was kinda, kinda nice, having somebody like that... I realized I didn't have to do it all, which is like huge.

The interns expressed that resource sharing was a major benefit. Monica described that, "if I needed any resources the librarian was there, my co-op was there, [and] people who were more in the field were um ready to help me out with anything I needed." The interns that discussed resource sharing as a form of collaboration all described it as the most helpful aspect of their collaborative experience.

### **Resource and Lesson Development**

The interns found that working with other staff members was a rewarding and fruitful experience. This was experienced by all of the interns to varying degrees and was especially salient in situations where the interns did not have an effective working relationship with their co-operating teacher. Ryan articulated this saying, "some of the collaboration that should have been happening [with the co-operating teacher] kinda fell short... a better experience was my collaboration with our [itinerant support teacher]." Ryan was directed to the itinerant support teacher through the in school administrator.

Other interns echoed the experience of finding another teacher or teachers to work with in the absence of a collaborative experience with the co-operating teacher. Monica expressed:

I'm kind of hesitant to say we collaborated. [My cooperating teacher] gave me his resource... all of his resources and just kind of said here you go and I just kind of



worked from that and then if I had questions I could ask him about it and he gave me the answer I guess. But I don't think we ever really worked on anything together.

Monica went on to describe that the most meaningful collaborative relationships that she had were with another teacher in her subject area and a Resource Teacher. With the first she was able to co-develop a unit for instruction, "I think that was the best example of me really feeling like I was a part, not just being mentored that I was... that this was my project with her and together we made it." With the latter she was invited to participate fully in the work of the resource teacher: the scheduling of Educational Assistants, the scheduling of students in the resource room, assessing classroom supports needed for students, attending meetings with parents, and the process of documentation that was present in the resource department. Monica went on to describe that she and the resource teacher are still in contact and that as a result of this positive relationship she is now considering a career in resource education.

Isabelle described reaching out to other teachers in the school and to the principal, "The principal was great!" When she reached out for support she found that teachers, including the principal, were willing to both support her in the classroom and in her planning. She spoke about her collaboration with one teacher in particular who guided her through some of the planning process of an English unit. The teacher shared some insight into how to start the unit and some things that the intern may want to avoid as she taught the unit.

Isabelle observed that despite these few interactions and conversations with teachers, the staff in the school where she was placed tended to work in isolation from

one another. She described the teachers as being “so individual that sometimes they can’t collaborate.” She continued to observe that, “their wishes or their intentions are so unique that they can’t seem to find much common ground.” As a result, the amount of collaboration that she experienced with other classroom teachers was minimal. She did however have a very meaningful and rewarding experience collaborating with the itinerant support teachers. The role of these teachers was to collaborate with classroom teachers in planning and teaching units, designed for students who needed more enrichment.

Lisa and Zoe both described feeling accepted by the staff and felt that they were not viewed as interns but rather as colleagues. They found that this was a favorable relationship and it gave them confidence to share their voices with the staff when it came to planning and troubleshooting. Despite this feeling of equality within the staff, Zoe expressed that with her co-operating teacher she felt less like a staff member and more “like the student.” She also said, “If she said something... I wouldn’t fight for what I thought because I felt like there’s that hierarchical relationship between us, which probably isn’t good.” This feeling of being subordinate within the classroom was consistent with her experience of having limited control in the classroom.

Lisa on the other hand had a positive experience seamlessly interacting with a variety of staff members. She found that because of the small staff and tight knit community within the school, the staff seemed to “know what other staff are busy with and they kinda really help them and support them.” As a result she felt that she had the support of the staff during her internship and that they reached out to support her wherever possible.

### **Co-teaching with Others**

Beyond defining collaboration as resource sharing and finding value in the information that they received from various teachers about what worked and what didn't, several inters were able to describe effective higher level collaborative experiences where they planned for, taught, and assessed students in partnership with other teachers. Ryan described how his work with an itinerant support teacher, whose role was to assist classroom teachers in developing units and assessment tools, aided in his ability to successfully develop and teach an inquiry based unit. "I met with her two or three times." At those meetings Ryan and the itinerant support teacher would discuss the assessment tools that he was planning to use and how they could be refined to examine the learning outcomes of the students. "We also kinda talked about how... an outcome based unit should run." Ryan explained that he had intended to introduce the unit and "then just let the kids run with it for a month." The feedback that he received from the itinerant support teacher allowed him to develop a more structured approach to teaching the lesson. The feedback and insight that Ryan received was valuable and appreciated. "If I had a [co-operating] teacher with that much knowledge I would have learned so much more."

Monica described that when she did have the opportunity to develop a collaborative project with another teacher in her teaching area that the process was helpful and effective. She expressed that she felt it was important to engage in collaborative planning and implementation of a unit. "I think it's important to do that... and from that experience I would do it again... I like giving people my input and my ideas and vice versa, so I would be open to that." Monica took away from that experience the

confidence to “go to other teachers and maybe ask them about [what] they might do for this project and I felt that I had maybe more ability to impact students through these types of projects in the school.” Despite her limited experience with collaboration during her internship Monica recognized the potential for developing powerful lessons through collaborative enterprises and was excited to begin “collaborating with... my friends and peers in the college.” She indicated that she had begun to exchange resources with other interns and to develop professional networks that would stay connected through e-mail.

Like Ryan and Monica, Isabelle recognized the value in working with other teachers in the planning, teaching, and assessing of students. She described in detail each of these stages in the work that she did with the itinerant support teachers with whom she worked:

We talked about how we were going to do an introduction and how we were going to make it exciting, you know, right from the get go and we talked about different art lessons that we could do with it, and incorporating writing obviously. Um, we talked about doing some dramatic stuff, which was lots of fun, and... you know everyone had ideas and it... it was ALL GOOD!

Isabelle went on to describe how much she enjoyed the work that was done in planning with the other teachers. She became even more excited when she described the pedagogical implementation of the unit. The lessons were taught in a common area where the students could work in small groups while the teachers circulated through the room:

We were building off each other and supporting each other... I’ve never seen it like that and I’ve never seen people like that work together um but also stop each other

at the same time and go, “oh you know what I really want to expend on what you’re saying and...” I never felt offended by that, I never felt like I’d missed something you know we’re all enhancing what everyone else is saying.

While she did not comment on the summative assessment used within the unit she did describe benefit of having several teachers providing feedback and continual formative feedback while working with the students.

Zoe however was able to describe in detail the value associated with collaboration when assessing student work. Zoe described that the staff at her school was administering a reading assessment of students across multiple grades within the school. She particularly valued the development of common assessment standards that the teachers established when measuring the performance of the students:

... that was a good experience to be able to um hear what other teachers consider a three or other teachers consider a four. And, work with them and really be on the same page regarding assessment. That was really good. I learned that exemplars are really important because really it seems like a lot of the time what one person thinks constitutes an excellent is what another person constitutes as good so I really believe that um schools need to be on the same page regarding rubrics and grading and reading and writing because or else the marks are just... or you’re just not going to know how much the students know if you are using different criteria and different standards.

While Zoe had limited experiences working closely with teachers in the school she did recognize the important role that collaboration has in terms of assessment and planning.

Three of the interns: Ryan, Monica, and Isabelle expressed their view that developing collaborative relationships with fellow interns was important for their further development. Isabelle demonstrated her eagerness to develop these collaborative relationships with other interns when she returned to the college for her final semester of study. “Doing the group work and working with my peers was amazing... there’s something in my peers that I don’t have... coming together and our strengths matching up... you know, make something better.” The desire to engage with other teachers and with other interns was a common theme in the data.

### **Perceptions of Ineffective Collaboration**

While most of the interns spoke in positive terms when asked about their experiences with collaboration in the schools in which they were placed, two of the interns described in detail problematic environments where opportunities that were intended to build professional dialogue broke down into negative experiences. This phenomenon is worth noting, as the situations where this breakdown occurred are similar in nature.

Both of the interns described division based professional development opportunities that disintegrated into environments where teachers either complained or disengaged. Ryan described the process of developing a common assessment of student learning at the division level as a flawed process. “It seemed like the process itself wasn’t working and the people involved saw that and so they shut off and they didn’t... they weren’t even doing their part to make it work.” He continued to describe how the teachers that were involved spent most of their time complaining “about how stupid” the process was.

Likewise Lisa expressed that at division wide professional development meetings, “We were all very negative coming into the PD’s. We rubbed off on each other... It was really venting and complaining. Oh ya!” Lisa went on to describe a culture of indifference when it came to Professional Development. The intern described her irritation and surprise at the behavior of the teachers overall:

Where I come from if somebody talks you listen, you look at them... you know unless you’re taking notes, but when we were at these PDs the principal of the school that I was at was sitting marking while the presenters talked. And, she was not the only one, there was a lot of other teachers [doing the same], but I mean if that’s your leader, you know that’s your example, obviously nobody’s gonna be enthusiastic about this, nobody’s really going to take anything in. [Especially] if your leader is demonstrating that this is not important to listen to.

On the whole these two interns identified that a culture of indifference and negativity was present when it came to professional development at the division level.

**Time for collaboration.** When asked about whether or not time was provided for the interns to collaborate with their cooperating teachers, whether at the school or through the internship placement, the interns reported that specific time was not set-aside during the day for collaborating with their cooperating teachers. One intern indicated that time was set-aside on specific days for meetings within professional learning communities but that these groups only met periodically throughout the year. All of the interns felt that if time had been set aside it would have been effectively used. Monica responded by saying, “I heard of these professional learning communities and I think that would have been helpful, especially for me as a new teacher.” The interns also reported that they

made an effort to make time to collaborate with other teachers during lunch breaks, prep periods, and before and after school. Overall the interns reported that they made time to work with other teachers on their own time and described their own initiative in seeking out teachers to work with.

### **Preparation and Learning**

It may not be surprising that in discussing their internship experiences one of the themes that emerged from the data was the preparation for the internship and the relationship that the interns had to the college both in terms of preparation and their experience in the field. Ryan indicated that he felt unprepared to enter the classroom and that he did not have an understanding of what “actually... goes on in a school and inside a classroom on a day to day basis.” He went on to explain that he did not think university classes could provide the experiential learning that he felt was missing, “You need to actually be in there.” He recognized that the student teaching experience did provide some in school experience but felt that those experiences were insufficient.

Ryan went on to describe that he believed that more “curricular classes” were needed to adequately prepare him for the internship.

I think I survived most of it because of my previous degree in English because I did know enough of the content knowledge whereas if I didn't have that previous degree I don't know... if the one... English curriculum studies class would have been enough to, to really go in there and know exactly what you want to teach.

Ryan felt that ongoing learning opportunities and greater curricular instruction would be key to improving intern preparation.



Zoe, who expressed that she too wanted to continue her learning, also shared the belief that further education within a specific teaching area was important. “I will probably come back to university and maybe do a masters” or “upgrade my [Arts and Sciences] degree to an honors.” Ryan went on to connect the idea of more instruction at the college level to the workload that he faced as an intern. Ryan explained that if more curricular planning and instruction had been done at the college level it would have alleviated the over planning that he engaged in. He noted, “I was probably over prepared.” Several of the interns also indicated that they had a tendency to over plan initially and that this added to the stress associated with the internship and the accompanying workload.

Several of the interns expressed frustration with the college while they were in the field in terms of communication and feedback. Monica and Ryan both indicated that they were unsure of what they were expected to have prepared in advance for their practicum. Through Monica’s experience she found that her “co-op teacher didn’t know either” and this led to difficulty in her preparation for her first teaching assignment. Monica also commented that the units she had developed and submitted to the university “wasn’t acknowledged at all.” She was frustrated not only by the fact that she felt that this work had been done in vain but that it also had the potential to provide her with valuable feedback about how to grow as a teacher. Overall the interns expressed frustration with the level of preparation and feedback that they had acquired both leading up to and during their internship. They also expressed a desire to continue their professional learning and to develop more depth of understanding in their teaching areas.

### **Workload and Experience**

One of the most predominant themes that emerged from the data was the existence of a high workload. Three interns expressed an expectation that the workload would be challenging and that they had taken steps to prepare for this. Monica and Zoe both expressed an understanding that their internship would be difficult. Zoe clarified this by saying, “I knew that it would be a lot of work and I mean that in a sense I was prepared for it” she continued, “I wasn’t expecting a bad experience I just thought it would be very, very difficult.” There was a common understanding among the interns that planning would take a major commitment in both time and energy.

Ryan expressed his understanding of the heavy workload he was expecting in terms of his preparation for the experience. He shared that as soon as he learned where he would be placed and the classes that he would be expected to teach he “went to work.” He said, “I was sitting at the table every day during the summer and just trying to get this huge unit plan done for myself.” This commitment to planning for the internship led to his realization that he had “probably over prepared” for the start of his internship.

Over planning was a common issue that Ryan and Lisa shared. Ryan felt that more instruction within the college on how to prepare lessons and units within curriculum studies classes would have helped him to understand that “you don’t have to sit down and plan out every minute of the day.” Lisa also initially strived for this level of detail in her planning.

Over planning was described by Lisa as she described that “I would plan my lessons and they were literally ten pages long for [a] half an hour lesson.” This level of planning was to her detriment as she found that “that the moment things don’t go the way

they should I'm flat... like I don't know what to do and I'm lost and what's going on here?" It was Lisa's co-operating teacher who advised her to be more flexible and to allow students to ask questions as topics arise in class. This revelation made life much easier for Lisa who "realized that teaching isn't as hard as I made it to be." The result was that Lisa was able to spend less time planning and felt less stress.

Isabelle found that the amount of planning that she would have to do to live up to her expectations of what a good classroom teacher should be was not sustainable. She admitted that as a result of being left alone in the classroom from the beginning of her internship she had to lower her own expectations relating to the type of teacher she saw herself as. Once she had an understanding of the workload she said, "There's no way I can be original and it's just not going to happen." She later elaborated on this feeling:

To be honest it was so stressful right away that I went, "I have to do the minimum to get by." Because if I don't do the minimum I'm going to go crazy and I will quit this internship and I don't want that.

The result of this conclusion was her feeling "very disheartened" and frustrated with the situation. While Isabelle took "full ownership" of the experience she indicated that she believed that she "would have felt more confident in handling a bigger workload if my co-op teacher had been there." In other situations where interns felt overwhelmed by the workload their co-operating teachers played a key role in helping to alleviate those feelings.

Lisa, who described herself as a perfectionist, clarified how her co-operating teacher helped her deal with the feelings of being overwhelmed by the workload. In her experience her co-operating teacher and her college supervisor advised her that she was

“producing too much” and that this level of planning would result in her burning out.

Lisa said that the “permission from them to do less really helped.”

Monica was also counseled by her co-operating teacher to “get away on the weekends.” Monica articulated the importance of striking a healthy work-life balance. She said, “I think that’s important to make sure like that you’re not just consumed in your work all the time.” She went on to explain that while she did put in long hours she was also able to make time to spend with family and friends.

Likewise, Zoe was reminded by her co-operating teacher that “the work is going to be there tomorrow” and that she could return to it then. The result was that Zoe was able to be more realistic in her time management:

So I felt, I didn’t feel like I had to get everything done like that second and I just kind of managed it and I worked when I needed to but I also gave myself time off when I needed to take care of myself.

The desire to strike a healthy work-life balance did emerge as a common theme. Each intern had a unique experience in how they handled this balance and the success that they were able to achieve. The relationships that Lisa, Monica, and Zoe had with their cooperating teachers aided in their ability to successfully manage the workload of their internship. By contrast Ryan and Isabelle did not feel supported in managing the workload. As a result Ryan felt over planned at times and Isabelle felt that she could not perform to her expectations.

### **Passion and Perspective**

The final theme that emerged from the data was an overall feeling of passion for teaching that each of the interns exhibited in their own way, and an internalized

perspective of the profession overall. The internship was at times an emotional experience for each of the participants. This sentiment was most clearly articulated by Isabelle who expressed that, “Teaching for me is a very emotional endeavor... tied to... my heart.” Likewise, all of the participants demonstrated a passion for their chosen profession and a continuing commitment to the field of education.

Ryan described his connection to the profession of teaching in terms of the connection he felt to his students and the energy he drew from their excitement and eagerness to learn. He felt a positive response from his students to his style of teaching and to the innovative approaches he employed in the classroom. “They were really responsive to [my approach].” He continued to express his passion for teaching by saying, “it was a lot of fun... I just kept thinking, I can’t believe this is my actual job.” He went on to say, “All those things kinda just contributed to me really wanting to, really wanting to keep doing this as a career because it was, it was just a blast, it really was.” As a result of this positive experience Ryan viewed himself as a teacher and demonstrated a desire to continue working in the field.

Monica described her internship as a “life changing experience that I will never get back to normal from.” She, like Ryan, also demonstrated a desire to continue working as a teacher, “I’m excited for when I get a [teaching] job... I mean I’m excited to make syllabuses like a class introduction sheet. And I’m excited to get to know my students and make my own bulletin boards and that’s weird but I’m excited about it.” Monica did explain that her main concern moving forward would be her ability to secure a teaching position so that she could continue working in the field that she was excited to enter.

The sentiments of Ryan and Monica were underscored by the sense of efficacy that Lisa and Zoe demonstrated when describing their passion for teaching. Lisa described being “excited about working with the children” as she moved forward in her career.

Zoe expressed that within the first couple of weeks of her internship, once the initial nervousness had passed that she understood “that [teaching] is something that I definitely want to do.” Zoe described that even though the internship did involve a lot of work, “it was enjoyable work.” She went on to say that, “I’m planning and I’m doing something that’s meaningful so in that way [the work] was fine.”

The desire to continue working in education because it was meaningful and rewarding work that spoke to each intern’s passion for teaching and working with students was evident in the data resulting from the interviews.

While each of the interns described a strong sense of self efficacy when it came to their future careers in education, several of them lamented the image that education seemed to hold in the public eye. Lisa came away from her internship having observed, “There’s not a lot of support for teachers um, not a lot of respect necessarily for teachers from parents. Especially if parents didn’t have a good time at school.” Several other interns expressed the sentiment that teachers lacked public support. Their belief was that while teaching may not be viewed in a positive light by society it was indeed a noble and valuable profession.

Zoe observed that the image of teachers may be affected by the actions of some teachers but that the profession overall was indeed valuable:

I value teachers a lot more [than when I started my internship]... Because I’ve seen everything that they have to deal with and I guess I value a teacher when they are

doing their job with everything that they have. You know, 'cause some people will just leave at three and not really think about the kids but... I' don't know I feel like it's a very honorable profession, I feel that it's not valued enough in society.

Zoe's views that some teachers leave early and do not think about their students after hours; and that this has an impact on how the profession is viewed by society, was shared by Ryan.

Ryan expressed that he has high standards for teachers and while his "views might have been a little idealistic beforehand" he still holds the profession in a "high regard." He went on to explain that this high regard was based on where he saw the field going in terms of the quality of graduates leaving the college. He recognized that there was a "dip" in terms of where he thought teachers performance "should be and where they actually are."

While less sure of the cause, Isabelle and Monica both recognized the lack of support that teachers receive and expressed their desire to improve the image of teaching. Isabelle lamented, "It seems to be that parents are not on the side of teachers as much anymore." Isabelle went on to describe that this perceived lack of support was heartbreaking because of the passion that she felt for her students' success. Isabelle's observations were made in response to a conflict that she had with a parent. She was disappointed that the dialogue with the parent was adversarial rather than constructive in terms of trying to do what was best for the student. "I care for these kids and I care for their education and there's nothing I want more for them than to succeed and for her to think the opposite was hard."

Monica described how she felt a need to be defensive about the work that teachers do in light of negative public opinion. “I find myself being defensive about our career, because lots of people you know make fun of you and, and tell you how amazing your life is ‘cause you’re only there Monday to Friday and have the summers off.” The interns shared an understanding that education is a valuable in terms of its benefit to society, that it is hard but valuable work.

### **Summary**

The thematic analysis of the data indicates that while each interns experience was unique and the variety of experiences diverse there were some common experiences and resulting perceptions that seemed to be a result of the internship itself. Each of the interns expressed excitement and anticipation that is consistent with a desire to perform at a high level and to engage in meaningful work. The interns described preconceived ideals of what the characteristics of a good teacher were, which included the need to collaborate with others and especially with their cooperating teachers. The interns expressed mixed feelings about being left alone to manage a classroom and extracurricular activities. In some instances the opportunity was empowering and allowed the interns to experience a level of leadership and mastery that they needed and desired; in other circumstances it created anxiety and feelings of abandonment. These experiences and the resulting emotions were described in conjunction with other barriers to success that the interns perceived. These barriers were often expressed in terms of negative actions or inactions by the cooperating teachers or as systemic barriers that the interns faced alongside the teachers in the schools. Each intern was able to identify and express the value that they saw in the collaborative experiences that they shared with



teachers in the schools in which they were placed. These experiences often occurred with teachers in the schools that were not their cooperating teachers but who held other roles. While the overall experiences indicated a high workload, the interns found that with the assistance and support of their cooperating teachers they were able to strike an acceptable work life balance, even though in some instances the workload was identified as unsustainable. Finally the interns expressed a genuine passion for teaching and a desire to remain within the profession. This passion was described in terms of a continuing desire on the part of the interns to support students both inside and outside the classroom.

The following chapter will examine these themes in the context of the literature on Generation Y, the induction and retention of new teachers, and professional collaboration. This analysis will serve to give greater context to the experiences of the interns and to identify the resultant findings of this study.

## **FINDINGS THROUGH A HERMENUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

In response to the research questions of this study, this chapter is a discussion of the findings as they emerged through the hermeneutical analysis of the data, as found through the transcendental examination and theming of the interns' narratives. As discussed in Chapter 3, hermeneutics is an examination of the lived experiences of the participants through a reflective analysis of essences of the experiences in terms of commonalities and themes that relate to the literature (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Therefore this chapter will describe the interns' experiences and perceptions of collaboration that resulted from their practicums. This analysis will also include my interpretation of the significance of these experiences and perceptions as they relate to the literature presented in Chapter 2 and outlined in the theoretical framework of this work.

In connection with the initial survey results, which were used as the basis for examining the question of why interns in the field viewed collaboration as less valuable than those who were in their pre-internship year of study, the interview data presented in Chapter 4 revealed that the interns had a shared expectation that collaboration, especially with their co-operating teachers, would be an important component of their experience. This is consistent with the literature on the workplace values of middle class Generation Y employees. The literature indicates that Generation Y teachers desire that collaboration will be part of their work experience (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). The interview data were also consistent with the survey data, which indicated that pre-internship teacher candidates placed a high value on collaboration in the work place.

### **From Expectations to Experiences**

Pre-service teachers' development is affected by their expectations about how they will learn from their co-operating teachers, the pedagogical approach of their co-operating teachers, and the social and cultural contexts of the school (Wang & Odell, 2003). This supports a constructivist view of teacher development within the social and cultural contexts of the school and suggests that teacher education programs should provide a solid base of understanding for teacher candidates in curriculum, instruction, and current assessment practices prior to their internship; furthermore that current teacher education programming should be understood and reinforced by the practice of the co-operating teachers with whom interns are placed (Wang & Odell, 2003). The first finding of this study is that the interns faced challenging realities when dealing with the contrast between the relationships that they expected to engage in and the ones that they actually lived through during their practicum.

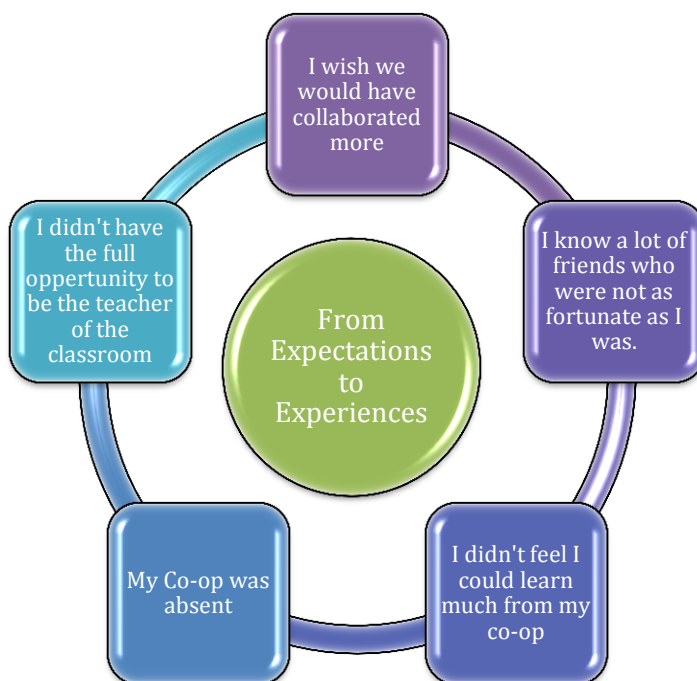
#### **Interns Expected a Mentoring Relationship**

The interns revealed that they had expectations about the type of collaborative relationships they would have with their cooperating teachers as related to planning, pedagogical development, and assessment. This finding is consistent with the results of an extensive review of the literature regarding induction and its impact on the development of new teachers conducted by Wang, Odell, and Schwille (2008) which revealed that "beginning teachers highly regard and expect a formally structured mentoring relationship that focuses on lesson observation and lesson based discussions and that they identify that such activities in their induction affect their teaching practice and learning" (p. 140). The data revealed that the interns understood what an effective

collaborative relationship should look like and that they expected that these relationships would have an impact on their continued learning.

With this understanding in place, the data revealed that in four of the five experiences effective collaboration with the co-operating teacher, assigned to each intern, did not occur. In the fifth experience Lisa believed that her experience was unique and that most interns did not receive the same amount of support that she did or have the same type of collaborative relationships that she enjoyed. Figure 2 depicts a collection of quotes from each of the participants that serves as a reminder of the data. These statements articulate the frustration and disappointment that the interns felt as a result of the relationship that they had with their cooperating teachers. This frustration may be understandable when seen through the lens of the current literature on Generation Y employees who expect that they will be part of a collaborative team within the workplace, that they will receive timely feedback, and that they will be engaged in meaningful work (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010)

Lesson observations and lesson based discussions about improving the interns teaching skills are affected by the culture of the school in which they occur (Wang, et al., 2008). The interns who described not having strong collaborative experiences portrayed their school cultures as individualistic where staff collaboration was either dysfunctional or absent. The one intern, who represented the exception to this norm, described her school as a small and close-knit community where the staff worked in collaboration to improve student learning. The literature supports that when a school staff is able and willing to work together to examine and improve upon classroom practices improvements in the students' performance or experience does occur (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2006).



*Figure 2.* Relationship model of the views of interns regarding the shift from expectations of their experience to the experiences lived during the internship.

The amount of collaboration and professional learning that the new teachers are exposed to relates to the culture of the school in which they are placed (Wang, et al., 2008). In schools or classrooms where individualistic teaching was the norm the interns were either abandoned or micromanaged by their co-operating teacher. In the school where the intern was part of a collaborative community that focused on student learning a higher degree of collaboration occurred. The experiences of the interns support the assertion “that learning to teach is influenced by the school culture” (Wang, et al., 2008, p. 140).

The interns described that they had developed their own views on planning, instruction, and assessment when they began their internships, which were reflected in their expectations. As stated by Wang and Odell (2003), in order for interns to further develop their practical skills in each of these areas, they required the opportunity to

examine their own views in comparison to the views and practices of their cooperating teachers. This type of learning environment often did not exist in the context of the intern-coop relationship described in this study. While Lisa indicated that she had the opportunity to work with and learn from her cooperating teacher, the other interns had to find these learning opportunities through their interactions with other staff members.

When considering the experiences that the interns shared about being left on their own to manage either classroom or extracurricular programming there is sufficient data to suggest that most of the interns felt, in one way or another, a sense of isolation or abandonment at some point during their internship. The scenario that Monica described, in positive terms, when she was left in charge of a resource classroom when the assigned teacher was unavailable is an abuse of the intern's role.

### **Interns Wanted to Learn from Others**

The data revealed that learning how to improve their practice was a concern for the participants and that they expected this learning to occur in collaboration with teachers in the schools where they were placed. The ability of the participants to know what an effective collaborative relationship looked like was revealed in their ability to identify those relationships when they occurred. Each of the interns was able to describe situations in which they collaborated in a meaningful way with teachers in the schools in which they were placed. Ryan, Monica, Isabelle and Zoe all described the value that they saw in the collaborative relationships that they shared with staff in their buildings, besides their co-operating teachers, and how those relationships positively affected their planning, pedagogical, and assessment practices. What was also evident from the data

was that these effective and beneficial collaborative relationships were the exception rather than the norm throughout each of the interns' placements.

The data from this study also revealed that the interns shared the concerns of other new teachers including "classroom management, curriculum resources, and beginning teachers relationships with students" (Wang, et al., 2008, p. 140). Both pre-service and beginning teachers have a tendency to focus more on the relationships that they develop with students and classroom management than on their own pedagogical development (Wang & Odell, 2003; Wang, et al., 2008). This becomes problematic when pre-service and beginning teachers are required to assume the same responsibilities as experienced teachers, instead of focusing on the development of their skill in planning, pedagogy, and assessment (Wang, et al., 2008).

The data in this study revealed that the interns had expressed a continuing desire to learn more about curriculum resources and implementation from their co-operating teachers. A disconnect was revealed in data between interns' expectations surrounding the collaboration that they would receive from the co-operating teachers and the amount of actual collaboration that occurred. In order for interns to develop their skills, the presence of a professional relationship that challenges the interns' skills and beliefs must be present (Wang & Odell, 2003). Therefore the skill and the willingness of the cooperating teachers to engage in the learning process with the interns are key to the interns' continued development.

### **Interns Were Often Left to Figure Things out for Themselves**

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) outlined that teacher induction programs must support both the professional and personal needs of new teachers. This distinction

recognizes that personal support and technical skill are separate and that each is important to the healthy development and successful induction of new teachers into the profession of teaching. This belief is supported by Self Determination Theory which asserts that healthy communities and workplaces support the individual's needs for competence, autonomy, and connection to others (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Within this theory, autonomy differs from independence in that "Autonomy means to act volitionally, with a sense of choice, whereas independence means to function alone and not rely on others" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 15). When interns had opportunity to teach and coach without the supervision of a co-operating teacher their autonomy may not have been supported. The data revealed situations in which interns felt that responsibilities had been offloaded onto them, which represents a lack of control over the situation. In situations where an individual rejects collaboration with others as a result of pressure to be independent or due to an uncomfortable relationship with someone who might otherwise be a collaborator, but in this case a co-operating teacher or any other member of the school community, represents a controlling relationship and thus does not allow for the exercise of an individual's autonomy, in this case the intern (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

In the data interns described situations where they may have felt independent but in which their inherent need for autonomy was not satisfied. Specifically when they were placed in control of an extracurricular program or a classroom without the necessary connection to other educational staff in the building, interns were placed in a situation that had the potential to undermine their confidence. In these situations where the school's social climate becomes pressuring or controlling, the intrinsic motivation of the interns can be undermined (Deci & Ryan, 2008). A healthy school climate meets the



needs of new teachers by supporting their autonomous participation in decision-making and collaboration within the school community (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

**Dealing with negative feedback and conflict.** The data also revealed that two interns experienced isolation when dealing with difficult people. Both situations, as described by Ryan and Isabelle, included negative feedback from either a parent or a staff member in which they felt a lack of support from their cooperating teachers. Monica and Zoe went on to describe the direct negative feedback that they received from their cooperating teachers and the emotional impact that it had on them. Negative feedback can have a deteriorating effect on the motivation of interns as demonstrated by the frustration that these interns felt when under the micromanagement of their co-operating teachers who stifled their ability to experiment and make mistakes. Within the framework of Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), negative feedback has the capacity to destroy motivation by undermining an individual's need for competence. The impacts of interns feeling amotivated during their internship may speak to the decline of value placed on collaborating with teachers in the workplace. More research into the motivation of teacher candidates and the impacts that an unhealthy school climate can have on the motivation of interns and new teachers to engage in collegial interactions that promotes student achievement and academic success may be needed. The data presented in this paper may suggest that interns are entering schools that do not live up to the definition of healthy school climate. Delving deeper into the literature on school culture:

A healthy school climate: (a) meets the needs of new teachers through participation in school-wide decision-making and collaborative practices; (b) prizes student

achievement and academic emphasis; and (c) is characterized by a positive view of school leadership, that is, leadership that supports collaboration, collegial leadership, and provides resources. (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010, p. 1006)

The result of this may have a negative effect on the willingness of the interns to seek out relationships that would support both their professional and personal needs. This finding underscores the importance of the need to develop an increased focus on school leadership and the role of the co-operating teacher in the induction of interns into the teaching profession.

### **Finding Collaborative Relationships**

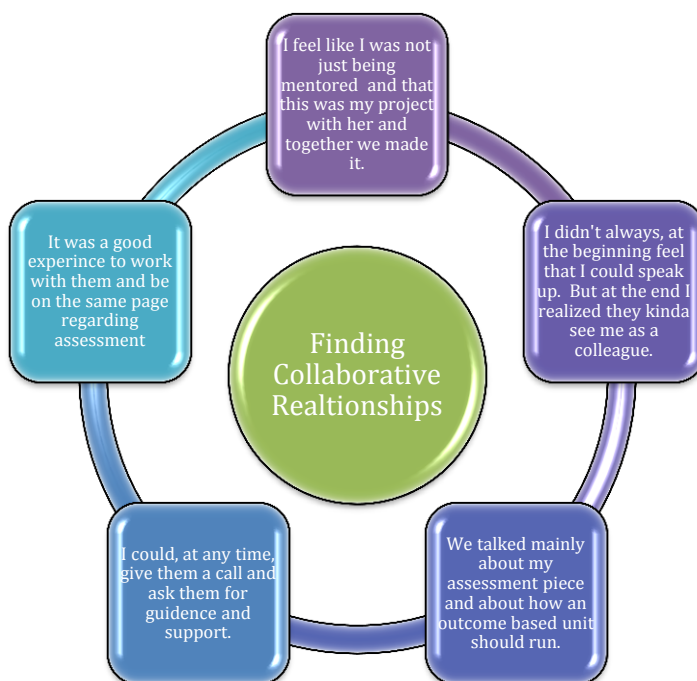
Generation Y teachers and interns value collaboration with colleagues, they do not want to recreate curricular programming if effective resources can be shared, and they are eager to learn about what works from experienced teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Cogshall, et al., 2011). The Generation Y interns in this study expressed a desire for collaboration at any level including resource sharing, dialogue around resource and lesson development, and co-teaching and unit development with specific learning outcomes as the focus. In many cases, collaborative experiences did not exist between the interns and the cooperating teachers; however, the interns sought and were open to collaborative relationships among other teachers in the school.

### **Resource Sharing Guided Collaboration**

The belief that resource-sharing is a major component of an intern's collaboration with their cooperating teachers, seemed to be shared by both interns and cooperating teachers. This was evident in the willingness, as reported by the interns, of co-operating

teachers and other teachers on staffs to share resources. This was often the main type of collaboration between the interns and the co-operating teachers.

The reliance on resource sharing and the overall absence of functioning PLCs in the data is concerning. PLCs encourage teachers to focus more on their students, improves the culture of learning communities through increased collaboration, and improves student achievement scores (Vescio, et al., 2008). Despite this lack of functional PLCs within the schools in which the interns were placed, the interns did report experiencing some powerful collaborative relationships that did exhibit some of the characteristics of an effective PLC including: (a) shared values and norms about student learning; (b) a clear focus on student learning; (c) reflective dialogue regarding planning, pedagogy, and assessment; (d) the de-privatization of teaching; (e) and a collegial focus on collaboration (Vescio, et al., 2008). The data revealed that interns established collaborative relationships with teachers other than their co-operating teachers (see Figure 3). The language of the interns revealed that when they felt supported by teachers and were viewed as colleagues that they felt open to feedback and a willingness to approach others for guidance or assistance if needed. This openness aided in their ability to effectively develop assessment models and develop a better understanding of how to effectively plan, teach and assess their students. This process took time, in some cases it was initiated by another teacher, in other cases the interns sought out other people to work with when they found that their co-operating teacher was not available. This may account for the decrease in the value that the interns placed on collaboration in the survey data as all of the interns, with the exception of Lisa, had not yet found meaningful collaborative relationships at the time of the survey.



*Figure 3.* Relationship model demonstrating how interns expressed their positive experiences with collaboration.

The interns expressed that they recognized the value in working with other teachers and expressed that they would be open to future collaboration. Several of the interns indicated that they would initiate that collaboration once they had secured a teaching position. The interns demonstrated that they had a desire and aptitude to work in collaboration with other teachers. It will be important to their success to be able to work in school environments that support professional collaboration or that operate as functioning PLCs. Generation Y teachers who are left to operate independently or in isolation within a school community are more likely to leave the school or the profession despite their desire to make education a lifelong career (Anhorn, 2008; Coggschall, et al., 2011; Coggschall, et al., 2010).

The interns shared that when they were included in collaborative planning, teaching, and assessment that they felt more like colleagues and less like students. Zoe

described how when she felt that she was being treated like a student rather than a colleague; it had a negative impact on her self-esteem. The interns, who are all members of Generation Y, conveyed clearly their desire to learn from more experienced teachers during their internship, especially their co-operating teachers, and to be treated as colleagues who participate fully in the development of classroom programming. They also demonstrated an expectation that, while their initial ideas about teaching were overly romanticized, their ideas and passion for student learning would be taken seriously by the teachers with whom they were collaborating.

Through the demonstration of their desire to collaborate with other teachers, the positive interactions that they had when working with other teachers, and their aspiration to engage in meaningful work that improves student learning the interns demonstrated many of the characteristics that can lead to the successful implementation of a successful PLC. And yet, the interns seemed to be unaware of what a PLC was. Ryan stated this outright and also shared that when it was explained to him by his school administrator, he was excited to participate in a PLC. The Generation Y interns seemed to recognize the value in working with other teachers and have a natural aptitude for working within a PLC. Strong PLC based internship and induction programs have the potential to improve student learning, improve the skill development of new teachers through collaboration with master teachers, and meet the personal needs of interns as they enter the teaching workforce (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Vescio, et al., 2008).

### **Time for Collaboration was Not Provided**

Overall the school cultures that the interns encountered did not meet the desire of teachers of all generations, specifically the Generation Y interns who participated in this

study, to engage in meaningful collaborative work (Coggshall, et al., 2010). None of the schools or their parent school divisions provided the time needed for teachers to collaborate which Behrstock and Clifford (2009) describe as essential to the development and retention of Generation Y teachers. This may be a result of what Elmore (1996) described as a powerful cultural norm that “describes successful teaching as an individual attribute rather than a body of deliberately acquired professional knowledge and skills (p. 17).” Unfortunately it is often the case, especially within the context of modern day neoliberal government policy, that teachers are seen as either effective or ineffective in their practice. This view could result in a tendency to adopt static measurements of teacher and student performance rather than engaging in transformational policy initiatives aimed at improving the quality of instruction and the measureable growth of students over the course of the school year. Rather educational reform initiatives should allow teachers to develop their skills through focused collaboration on instructional practice (Supovitz, 2002). Within the context of today’s educational environment teachers are often being asked to do more within the confines of the school day. Ryan and Isabelle observed that their cooperating teachers often did not have time to collaborate with them. This may have added to the frustration that they expressed, relating to the lack of meaningful collaboration that they engaged in with their cooperating teachers. Dedicating time to professional collaboration and mentorship during the school day does have a significant cost associated with it, which is often not in keeping with present day neoliberal policies of government spending on education.

Today’s teachers and interns find themselves working within the framework of greater political pressure from governments that are increasingly adopting neoliberal

policies regarding social program spending, including education spending. Neoliberalism is rooted in the belief that an unregulated free market system can provide the best improvements to social spending programs including education (Carr & Porfilio, 2011). However, governmental organizations and educational policy makers should be cautioned in applying a purely capitalistic modality to education, which by its very nature is diverse and based on the development of individuals both as professionals and as students. In the past two decades social spending in Canada has been reduced creating an environment in which private interests have had the opportunity to move into the public service sector including education (Davidson-Harden, Kuehn, Schugurensky, & Smaller, 2009). At the same time provincial governments have moved to centralize and reduce public spending on the public service sector, which has been accompanied by what Davidson-Harden et al. (2009) described as a “disturbing trend in ‘private’ funding for public education at the operational level” (p. 55). The risks of this trend include the potential for greater inequality in society and an increased divide between the wealthy and the poor in Canadian society.

Initiatives dedicated to promoting effective educational transformation should focus on aiding teachers, especially those new to the profession, to understand the relationship between effective practice and student learning outcomes (Supovitz, 2002). The literature demonstrates that effective methods for improving student learning include: supporting greater professional development, with a focus on instructional practice, and professional collaboration through PLCs (Supovitz, 2002; Vescio, et al., 2008). These types of initiatives require support both in terms of policy and finance, if improvements are to be made to the present day education system.

This failure to create opportunities for collaboration and to build strong PLCs may signal an overall systemic problem of individualistic school cultures as articulated by Isabelle. She observed that “[teachers were] so individual that sometimes they can’t collaborate” and that, “their wishes or their intentions are so unique that they can’t seem to find much common ground.” Similarly Ryan, Zoe, and Monica lived through this in their struggles to find collaborative relationships in the schools in which they were placed. On the contrary, instead of providing professional development opportunities that involved collaboration and supported professional growth, the interns reported that the professional development opportunities that they participated in at the division level were dysfunctional and manifested a culture of complaint. The literature suggests that professional development that focuses on increased collaboration, which is an attractive workplace quality for teachers of all generations, has been shown to improve student achievement (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Coggshall, et al., 2010; Vescio, et al., 2008). In learning communities where teachers are encouraged to work together but lack structure and a clear focus on student learning student achievement does not improve (Vescio, et al., 2008). When the interns described their observations of these types of initiatives they found that they often devolved into meaningless exercises. On the contrary Generation Y interns and teachers expect to work collaboratively with school administrators and fellow teachers to improve teaching practice and student achievement within their schools (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Coggshall, et al., 2010). The data verified this finding in the literature as the interns in this study demonstrated a willingness and desire to work in collaboration with teachers throughout their schools including the administrators.



### **A Cultural Disconnect: Disillusionment and Resilience**

One of the purposes of this study was to examine Generation Y interns' perceptions of collaboration. In so doing it was interesting to see the lasting changes that a lack of collaboration would have on the interns once they returned to the college for their final semester of study. The interns expressed that they did tend to continue to learn from others within their cohort when they returned to the College of Education after their internship; however it was found that they continued to struggle with the cultural divide resulting from the differences between their expectations and their experiences. They expressed a desire to retain characteristics of Generation Y, who are eager to share resources, experiences, and to construct knowledge through collaboration with their peers (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010).

#### **The Desire to Collaborate Remained After the Internship**

The interns in this study did in fact continue to construct knowledge of their teaching through collaboration with their peers upon their return to the College of Education for their final semester of study. This is an important contrast to the lack of collaboration that they experienced during their internship as it indicates that the interns were not fully acculturated into the schools' culture of individualism in teaching. This was further evidenced by the fact that most of the interns expressed a desire to effect change in the schools that they would enter in their first years of teaching. For Ryan this included a belief that his fellow graduates were poised to effect positive change in the field of education.

### **High Expectations of the Profession**

School culture and the accepted patterns of teaching practice that existed within the schools was a topic that continually emerged from the interviews with the participants in this study. In all of the interviews the interns reported, to varying degrees, struggling with their preconceived ideas about the teaching profession and the culture of the profession as they encountered it. Each of the interns described scenarios that reflected the conservative ideas of what the function of schools should be and the ways in which teaching should be conducted. These views were amplified by the negative view of teachers and the teaching profession that some of the interns observed from parents and members of the communities that the schools served. While the interns did have some positive interactions with parents, they felt overall that public support for the profession of teaching was low. Lisa speculated, based on her experience, that this low support may have been a result of poor experiences or preconceived notions of education resulting from the parents' own schooling.

The roles that Ryan, Isabelle, Zoe, and Monica's cooperating teachers played, whether absent or officious, represented a belief on the part of the cooperating teachers that teaching is an individual enterprise that each person has to either figure out for themselves or precisely emulate to learn. This belief was pervasive in the descriptions that the interns provided about the relationships that they had with their cooperating teachers. These descriptions reflect a cultural belief that is common within the teaching profession; that excellent teaching is a personal characteristic rather than a learned set of skills that can be developed by most teachers over time (Elmore, 1996). The interns in this study described the profession of teaching, as they experienced it, as disengaged,

disinterested in improving practice, and that lived up to some of the negative stereotypes of teachers that they had hoped not to see. The teachers that they worked with were in some cases described as compliant and unwilling to challenge the status quo for fear of creating “uncomfortable” relationships with parents or staff, even if they felt that the status quo was not in the best interest of the students. On the whole the interns found that the cultures of the school, with the notable exception of Lisa’s experience, ran counter to their desire for collaborative mentorship relationships that would have aided in the development of their planning, pedagogical, and assessment skills. They encountered through their collective experience what Elmore (1996) called a powerful “cultural norm that describes successful teaching as an individual attribute rather than a body of deliberately acquired professional knowledge and skills” (p. 17). This culture within the teaching workforce was vivid when held in contrast to the cultural characteristics of Generation Y professionals.

Each of the interns, who were members of Generation Y, exhibited dismay when their cultural characteristics of their generational cohort were not met. Some of these norms included: a) a belief in their own ability to make a difference in their communities, including in the lives of their students; b) a desire for inclusiveness and tolerance, which they expect to see in their places of work; c) opportunities to share and construct knowledge through collaboration, including timely feedback about their own performance; d) a high personal standard for achievement and an expectation to be recognized for their contributions and; e) a tendency to continually construct knowledge as needed to inform and understand issues as they arise.

Each of the interns described school cultures that challenged their preconceived ideas regarding the nature of work. Frustration with the lack of collaboration was accompanied by feelings of disappointment when interns felt that their workplace expectations were not being satisfied. Not being able to have their ideas heard, construct knowledge with others, or make a difference in the lives of their students had an initial negative impact on the desire of some of the interns to continue teaching (see Figure 4). The voices of the interns indicated their frustration and dismay with some of the future colleagues that they encountered in the field. The interns demonstrated in several instances altruistic ideas about teaching and held an expectation that other teachers should endeavor to uphold a high standard of professional practice.



*Figure 4.* Relationship model of the impact that individual teaching culture had on Generation Y interns.

Isabelle experienced the most profound sense of a cultural disconnect both in terms of the nature in which work was done in the school and how it related to her need for

support and also in terms of the moral education that the school taught, that was in her view non-inclusive and potentially harmful to students. She expressed great concern that negative and non-inclusive attitudes could have a negative effect on the self-esteem of students. As quoted previously, “I believe that the world is more beautiful when people are diverse. And I think that it is so sad when people are squashed for something that they believe differently or something that they believe against the norm.” In the end she held her relationship with her co-operating teacher as a counter example of what a collegial relationship should entail and maintained that “collaboration is crucial” and that had she not had opportunities to collaborate with other teachers she would have had a more emotionally taxing experience and that her performance in the classroom would have suffered as a result.

Interns are subject to enculturation within the school climates that they find themselves within. Even though the interns expressed Generation Y characteristics along with idealistic ideas about teaching and learning, some of the effects of the schools culture did affect their desire to continue in the field of teaching and their views of the teaching profession overall. Despite their strong views on the value of collaboration interns often found it difficult to resist the cultural influences and practices embodied by the schools in which they are placed and the cooperating teachers with whom they work (Wang & Odell, 2003). The ability of the cooperating teacher to facilitate a culture of learning and professional growth through collaboration is an important feature of interns continuing development as professional educators.

### **Preparation for Teaching and Dealing with the Workload**

Many Generation Y professionals including teachers place a high value on education and the role that it plays in their preparation for and success in the workplace (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009). Ryan and Zoe indicated that they placed a high value on continued professional learning and expertise in the areas in which they wanted to teach. This is consistent with the findings of Behrstock and Clifford (2009) who found that members of Generation Y place a high value on education and attribute their workplace success to their educational opportunities. Ryan and Zoe both described their undergraduate degrees as a valuable component in their preparation to enter the classroom. Ryan went on to describe his desire for a greater focus on curricular classes in the College of Education. He felt that he was underprepared as he entered his internship to adequately understand and teach the curriculums of the subject he had been assigned. However, once he had the opportunity to observe the curricular knowledge of his co-operating teacher he felt that his knowledge, while still inadequate, was deeper than that of the practiced professional. In Ryan's view, this showed a need for continual professional learning and a focus on keeping up to date with current trends and technology.

### **Interns Desired Feedback on Performance**

Coggshall et al. (2011) found that Generation Y teachers desired frequent feedback on their performance from supervisors, mentors, and administrators. The interns in this study indicated that they too desired frequent feedback from both their co-operating teachers and their college supervisors. In the cases of both Monica and Ryan this desire was expressed through their frustration with the lack of feedback and direction that they

and their co-operating teachers received from the college. Based on the research, which suggests that Generation Y teachers expect greater feedback and opportunities to discuss their performance than previous generations along with the data in this study that supports this finding, interns expect a venue for continuing dialogue and feedback that can be readily available. They also expect that practical learning, as Ryan said, “about actually what goes on in a school” will occur alongside professional learning related to planning for, teaching, and assessing students.

### **Interns Encountered Heavy Workloads and Required Support**

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) outlined a framework for supporting new teachers that included support for a teacher’s professional and personal needs. Similar to the findings of McCann and Johannessen (2004) who described the workload of new teachers as “all consuming” (p. 141). The interns interviewed in this study expressed that their workload was, at times, overwhelming. In the cases of Lisa, Monica, and Zoe their co-operating teachers were instrumental in helping the interns to alleviate stress. McCann and Johannessen (2004) speculated that new teachers may need access to counseling and be provided with opportunities to develop personal relationships in order to avoid situational depression arising from the overwhelming workload that they faced. In the case of the interns in this study their co-operating teachers proved instrumental in providing the necessary supports needed to handle the heavy workload and find a more realistic work life balance. The interns articulated both the stress that they felt when the workload became overwhelming and the relief that they felt when their cooperating teachers supported them. They describe both the stress that the workload caused, how they were able to deal with it, and the impact that it had on their personal wellness.

Given the contrast between the experiences of Lisa, Monica, and Zoe and the experience of Isabelle who felt demoralized by the amount of work that she felt she could do in light of the failure of her co-operating teacher to provide effective professional or personal support, the importance of a framework for intern support becomes apparent. Isabelle's experience points to the existence of a school culture that does not support the psychological needs of interns. Anhorn (2008) describes this type of school climate as one that 'eats it's young' referring to the extra stress that is associated with the first year of a teachers career. In her study Anhorn (2008) describes the importance that new teachers place upon their practicum experience in terms of helping them to learn what it means to really be a teacher. Schools that do not support the needs of interns or new teachers, in the development of their professional or personal needs, run the risk of burning out these new teachers before they fully develop the skills and supports they need to be successful in the classroom.

Behrstock and Clifford (2009) outlined that members of Generation Y have strong ties to their families, friends, and communities; to whom they are more connected than any previous generation. Providing interns with the opportunity to take care of their personal needs and as Zoe described, time to take care of herself when needed, and is an important component to consider in the development of effective professional learning environments. While the interns did not indicate that the amount work was unexpected or even unreasonable, several of them indicated that the workload would not be sustainable for a longer period of time. Ryan related that the workload was manageable because he was single and isolated himself during his internship. He felt that having family commitments during his internship would have made the workload unmanageable.



Due to the intense workload and in keeping with the literature on the induction of new teachers, both the school communities into which the interns are placed as well as the college should consider interns' need for personal as well as professional support throughout their internship. Each of the interns in the study described their commitment to teaching in terms of a developing sense of passion for education. This passion was balanced with an understanding that their personal wellness was an important aspect of remaining committed to teaching.

### **Interns Expressed a Commitment and Passion for Teaching**

The interns demonstrated a collective passion for teaching and expressed their commitment to continue in the field of education. The interns also demonstrated a commitment to the profession and to improving the image of teachers as they saw it in the public eye. The interns' passion for teaching was characterized by the expectation that other teachers would share this passion and perform at a high level of competency. The interns reported feeling frustrated and disheartened when they observed some teachers living up to the negative stereotypes that they felt the public held towards the profession.

As Sir Ken Robinson (2011) pointed out, a great many people go through life not enjoying what they do for a career and simply do their job out of the utility that it serves. Others however, demonstrate a profound sense of passion and commitment for what they do. For people to discover, pursue, and become successful within their passions the right conditions must be in place. In this study each of the interns demonstrated a passion for teaching. They saw themselves as teachers. For interns to flourish the right conditions must be in place to support their passion for teaching, their personal needs, and their

professional growth. This has implications for the approach taken towards education by a variety of stakeholders including, but not limited to: professional organizations, government, and teacher education programs. According to Deci and Ryan (2008) environments that provide positive feedback about performance and that are supportive of the individual can increase the level of intrinsic motivation that a person feels. The interns in this study were highly motivated, but in some cases described a slump in their level of motivation to continue teaching as a result of the school climates and the professional cultures that they encountered. This finding is in keeping with the research of Deci and Ryan (2008) who also described how climates that exert pressure or control on an individual could have an amotivational effect.

The interns collectively expressed their connection to teaching in terms of the emotional connection that they had to the work that they felt called to do. For the interns in this study, teaching was not simply a job rather it represented who they were and was described in terms of being an integral component of their self-identity. Ryan verified that he wanted to make teaching a career and that he derived a lot of pleasure from teaching. Likewise Monica and Isabelle described their connection to teaching as an emotional feeling that helped to define them. Monica described her internship as a “life changing experience” while Isabelle described it as an “emotional endeavor” that is connected to her most authentic self. Zoe and Lisa described their desire to continue teaching as meaningful work and that making a difference in the lives of students was a major aspect of why they wanted to continue teaching. It is not surprising that these interns expressed such passion for teaching in terms of making a difference in the lives of students and a contribution to society. The literature on Generation Y workers suggests

that members of this generation are eager to make a difference in their communities and believe that they have the capacity to effect positive change (Behrstock & Clifford, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). While it may be surprising to find that the interns saw education as a lifelong career, this is supported by other research conducted into the views of Generation Y teachers. Coggshall et al. (2010) found that the majority of Generation Y teachers that they surveyed also saw teaching as a lifelong career. The findings of this study add weight to this finding and should be a positive indicator of the desire of committed young teachers to make a long-term commitment to students and learning. This should provide policy makers with incentive to invest in young teachers and interns to ensure that this desire to remain in the profession and the passion that Generation Y teachers bring to the workplace is fostered and harnessed to improve the learning outcomes of students in Saskatchewan schools.

### **Summary**

While the interns' experiences were limited, they did demonstrate that effective collaboration was of value to their development as new teachers. The interns understood what effective collaborative relationships were and expected to have them with their co-operating teachers. They were able to demonstrate their understanding of what effective collaborative relationships look like based on their descriptions of what they expected from those relationships and through their descriptions of the collaborative relationships that they had with other teachers in the schools.

The findings:

1. Interns faced challenging realities when dealing with the contrast between the relationships that they expected to engage in and the ones that they actually lived through during their practicum.
2. The Generation Y interns in this study expressed a desire for collaboration at any level including resource sharing, dialogue around resource and lesson development, and co-teaching and unit development with specific learning outcomes as the focus of the work. In many cases, collaborative experiences did not exist between the interns and the cooperating teachers; however, the interns sought and were open to collaborative relationships among other teachers in the school.
3. The interns continued to struggle with the cultural divide resulting from the differences between their expectations and their experiences.

Overall the findings indicate that while complex, the relationships that interns develop, especially with their cooperating teacher, are essential to their development and success during the internship. The characteristics that the interns shared were consistent with the literature on Generation Y professionals including teachers and the interns seemed to retain those characteristics even when the internship had ended. The lack of mentorship and functional PLCs that the interns had access to is concerning, especially when considering the literature on the positive impacts that these can have on teacher development and student learning. The experiences of the interns related strongly to their desire for meaningful mentorship relationships. This was not necessarily coupled to their Generation Y characteristics but rather seemed to be more reflective of the individualistic cultures of teaching that they encountered in the schools in which they entered and their

desire for meaningful relationships that would support their professional and personal growth as professionals.

The interns recognized the value in working with other teachers and expressed that they would be open to future collaboration. This was most often expressed through the relationships that the interns developed with teachers other than their co-operating teachers. The interns were hoping that the relationships that they had with their co-operating teachers would be both mentoring and professional. Unfortunately many of these cooperating teachers to intern relationships devolved into resource sharing instead of being truly collaborative. The interns and cooperating teachers held a shared belief that curricular resource development was a main feature of the cooperating teachers to intern relationship; little focus was given to the development of pedagogical skill or student assessment. This may have been a result of a lack of time for collaboration that was provided during the regular school day along with a failure to make time for collaboration as defined in this study outside of the school day.

Four of the five interns interviewed did not have effective collaborative relationships with their cooperating teachers. The fifth intern recognized that her relationship with her cooperating teacher was atypical and described it as an exception to the norm. As a result the interns experienced a period of disorientation and letdown without the collaborative support that they were expecting from their collaborating teachers. The interns recognized that learning how to improve their practice could be aided through meaningful work with other teachers. As a result of the individualistic culture of teaching that they encountered, several of the interns felt either micromanaged

or abandoned. The interns' perception of their ability to develop as teachers was affected by the school cultures that the interns encountered.

The impact that the school cultures had on the interns led to a sense of cultural disconnect that the interns experienced which was evidenced by the frustration that they exhibited when the cultural characteristics of their generation were not met. This was especially clear in the interns' expectations regarding the nature of work as they moved from university to the multigenerational setting of their school staffs. The cultural disconnect that they experienced was also visible in terms of how they viewed the culture of teaching profession with the reality of the school cultures that they were entering. Often the cultures of the schools ran counter to their desire for collaborative mentorship relationships.

The interns held a belief that collaborative time would have added value to their experience rather than exacerbating the already high workload. The interns overall were able to navigate a healthy work-life balance, however several of them admitted that the amount of work that they were expected to do was not sustainable. Despite the difficulty that they faced in terms of work load and adapting to the culture of the schools in which they were placed, they demonstrated a sense of purpose and a passion for teaching that was refreshing and promising for the future of the profession.

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The nature of work is changing. As new technologies are introduced, as more and more people connect online for both social and professional interactions, and as a new generation of professionals enter the workplace the ways in which people work and teach will continue to change. Generation Y teachers will bring with them new demands and changes of which we do not yet know the impacts. What the literature surrounding Generation Y teachers and the interns in this study do tell us is that current cultures and trends in places of work and learning, including schools and post-secondary institutions, must adapt to a new model or become less relevant and appealing in the eyes of this new generation.

The initial purpose of this study was to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of, collaboration as a result of their internships using a phenomenological approach. Five Generation Y interns were purposefully selected to inform the research questions of this study:

1. How do select Generation Y interns experience collaboration?
2. What are those select Generation Y interns' perceptions of collaboration as a result of their experiences?

In response to these questions, the interns experienced challenging realities when dealing with the contrast between the relationships that they expected to engage in and the ones that they actually lived through during their practicum. These experiences challenged their perceptions of what it meant to be a teacher and how they viewed the teaching profession. The interns felt that the relationship that they had with their cooperating teachers did not meet all of their professional needs.

The Generation Y interns in this study expressed a desire for collaboration at any level including resource sharing, dialogue around resource and lesson development, and co-teaching and unit development with specific learning outcomes as the focus of the work. In many cases, collaborative experiences did not exist between the interns and the cooperating teachers; however the interns sought and were open to collaborative relationships among other teachers in the school. The interns' perceptions of collaboration indicated that while they saw it as a valuable experience, it was not the norm in the schools in which they were placed.

The interns continued to struggle with the cultural divide resulting from the differences between their expectations and their experiences. The cultural disconnect that they experienced was real in terms of the expectations that they had about the nature of work and collaboration and the reality that they faced. The interns found that the cultural norms of the schools did not reflect their understanding of effective working relationships. The cultures of the schools that they entered did not meet their needs for feedback and collegiality.

### **Implications**

There are a number of implications arising from this study that relate to policy development concerning the induction of interns. There is also need for further research in the area of Generation Y interns and the impact that they will have on the nature of work in schools as they enter the workforce. The implications for theory, research, and practice are outlined here.



## **Implications for Theory**

The cultural characteristics of the Generation Y interns in this study played a role in their desire to engage in professional collaboration and have an impact on the profession as they saw it. The participants' limited ability to engage in meaningful and effective collaboration may have had a negative effect on how they viewed the profession and their desire to remain within it. A disconnect was revealed in data between interns' expectations surrounding the collaboration that they would receive from their cooperating teachers and the amount of actual collaboration that occurred. Because Generation Y teachers work and learn well in teams and have a desire for continual feedback they are more apt to seek out and engage in shared practice (Coggshall, et al., 2011; Rebore & Walmsley, 2010). They want frequent opportunities to observe other teachers and to be observed in order to receive feedback (Coggshall, et al., 2011).

The climate of schools in which interns are being placed must support the professional and personal needs of the interns for competence, autonomy, and belonging. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) outlined that a healthy school climate must meet the needs of new teachers by supporting their autonomous participation in decision making and collaboration within the school community. The findings of this study indicate that this is also true for interns. The interns described that they felt greater efficacy when they were treated as colleagues rather than as a student.

Tapscott and Williams (2010) explained that this shift represents a change in the way that students and instructors interact in the learning process towards a model that is based on discussion with students and active work with course material. Given the large geographical area that students from the University of Saskatchewan are spread over

while participating in their practicums, it seems only natural to develop on-line spaces for them to engage in continued social learning opportunities with classmates and instructors during their internship. This approach would be consistent with the findings of Coggs et al. (2011) who identified that Generation Y teachers are eager to use instructional and social networking technology to improve their practice.

Strong PLC based induction programs have the potential to improve student learning, improve the skill development of new teachers through collaboration with master teachers, and meet the personal needs of new teachers as they enter the teaching workforce (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Vescio, et al., 2008). Similarly in this study the interns recognized the value in working with other teachers to improve student-learning outcomes. As more Generation Y interns enter the profession, their aptitude for working in groups may increase the need for effective PLCs as a model of professional development and effective teaching practice. Elmore (1996) observed that “most educational reforms never reach, much less influence, long standing patterns of teaching practice, and are therefore largely pointless if their intention is to improve student learning” (p. 6). What the interns experienced was that while they were eager and willing to embrace new models of instruction and work within PLCs, the culture of the schools so deeply identified good teaching as an individual trait that any attempt to move beyond that model was met with resistance. The interns found that the best opportunities and resources to collaborate and work outside of this cultural paradigm was when they found allies who held an individual desire to engage in collaborative relationships. In the experiences of two interns these willing partners were external itinerant teachers who had a mandate to engage in professional collaboration across the division. The role of the

itinerant teachers may provide a beachhead for changing the cultural norms of behavior within the professional communities of these schools and require further examination by boards attempting to initiate systemic reform.

Members of Generation Y currently entering the professional workplace have a different worldview and understanding of the nature of work than members of the generations before them. As with previous generations these members of Generation Y will bring their own beliefs and expectations into the workforce and effect change that will represent their beliefs and understanding of the world (Tapscott, 2009). Generation Y interns seem to have a propensity for collaboration and a desire to effect positive change in the lives of their students. This was evident both in the literature regarding members of Generation Y currently entering the workforce and in the interviews with Generation Y interns in this study. These sources also revealed that members of Generation Y desire to continue their own education and professional development in order to continue to grow and improve in their work.

### **Implications for Research**

More research is needed to examine the effect of professional learning communities on the development of interns' pedagogical skill. The impacts that Generation Y interns will have on the nature of teaching will have an impact on how education is delivered in the future. The impact that this generational change will have on student learning is not yet apparent. Given the aptitude that the Generation Y interns in this study showed towards collaboration and working in PLCs there is hope that this generation of teachers will have a positive effect on student learning if appropriate policy implementation allows them to capitalize on their strengths and facilitate their view of the nature of work

and teaching. Further study into the use of PLCs as a model for new teacher and intern induction is needed including an examination of the impact that this model would have on student learning and on the development of new teachers' skills in effective instruction. Having the opportunity to work with other teachers through the stages of planning, instruction, and assessment was viewed as valuable by the interns in terms of their development. PLCs have the potential to improve student learning, improve the skill development of new teachers through collaboration with master teachers, and meet the personal needs of interns as they enter the teaching workforce (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Vescio, et al., 2008).

Resulting from the experiences of the interns who felt demoralized by the lack of or type of support that they received from their cooperating teachers, an investigation into the support that was provided, to meet the interns' personal needs, may be warranted. Further investigation into how professional and personal needs are met throughout the internship is needed. This includes an examination of how these factors interact to support new teachers and the impact that this may have on the decision of these graduates to enter and remain a part of the teaching profession. More research is needed into the ways that this new generation of young teachers can be supported and what role school administrators, boards of education, professional organizations, and experienced teachers can play to support new teachers.

Finally the research conducted in this study represents the perspectives of the interns. Further study is needed to examine the perceptions of the induction process from the viewpoint of beginning teachers who are currently involved in their first year or two of teaching, new teachers who have just finished the induction process and are now

moving into their fifth or sixth year of teaching, and of more experienced teachers who play the role of mentor or cooperating teacher. Their views concerning the effectiveness and purpose of induction and the impact that it has on the development of a new teacher and improving student learning may help to drive effective policy and practice regarding the hiring and training of new teachers.

### **Implications for Practice**

Similar to Coggs et al. (2010), the findings of this study support that members of Generation Y who enter the field of education intend to make it their career and to remain in the profession. This is positive news for boards of education that seek to employ teachers and reduce the high teacher turnover rates currently seen in the field of education. Through the experiences of the interns in this study, there was an overall lack of support for interns' personal and professional needs. Despite the culture of individuality that most of the interns encountered, they maintained a strong affinity for their Generation characteristics and desired to continue developing collaborative relationships as they entered the teaching profession.

When considering the nature of Generation Y interns and teachers, collaboration must be nurtured and emphasized as part of teacher education and induction programs, including the internship, in Saskatchewan and beyond. This may suggest that cooperating teachers require background and training in current teacher educational programming and be versed in the workplace expectations and needs of the interns entering their school; including the human resource implications for understanding and supporting Generation Y teacher candidates. It may also suggest that in terms of policy implementation that more time needs to be set-aside for interns and their cooperating

teachers to collaborate; as this was something that the interns said was missing from their experience. Having the opportunity to work with other teachers through the stages of planning, instruction, and assessment was viewed as valuable by the interns in terms of their development. This may help to address the disconnect, between interns' expectations surrounding the collaboration that they would receive from the co-operating teachers and the amount of actual collaboration that occurred.

The role that itinerant teachers played in collaborating with interns was especially powerful. Both Ryan and Isabelle described positive collaborative relationships with master teachers who worked in schools across their divisions to assist teachers in unit development and in collaborative teaching. The roles of these teachers directly supported the professional collaborative work that can make a difference both in the development of new teachers' abilities and in the positive learning outcomes of students.

As the interns expressed, they desired more frequent feedback from both their cooperating teachers and their college supervisors, which is consistent with the literature on the expectations of Generation Y works and teachers. In the cases of Monica and Ryan, this was expressed through the frustration that they felt from the perceived lack of feedback that they received from the college through their supervisors. This suggests that more needs to be done to provide cooperating teachers and interns with information about their roles and responsibilities along with the expectations of the college. Furthermore, due to Generation Y interns' comfort with technology and social media, the college may look for ways to develop Internet based options for feedback along with the exchange of ideas and experiences both among interns and with college supervisors. Tapscott and Williams (2010) argue that universities must adapt to a methodology of instruction that is

consistent with the rising digital age even if it means moving away from some of the pedagogies of the industrial age system upon which they are built. That is, moving away from information delivery and individual learning, towards a social view of learning.

Another implication that arises from the passion and commitment to teaching that the interns showed in their responses during the interviews is the requirement for trained mentors and a welcoming professional environment that honors the needs and perspectives of new teachers and interns. This has repercussions for a variety of stakeholders in education including: professional organizations, government, school divisions, and colleges of education. Supporting the development of interns requires investment by each of the stakeholders involved in the training of new teachers. High quality well trained mentors with a clear understanding of the roles, preparation and perspectives of interns are needed. Time, resources, and funding for greater collaboration opportunities among interns and with school staffs are also required. The interns also demonstrated that they wanted and need a high level of programming and standards for instruction in curricular planning, pedagogical development, and assessment. Teacher education programs should focus on the development of student teachers' ability to effectively plan for and assess their students. The development of their students' pedagogical skill, throughout their program including the internship, should also be a priority.

### **Reflections on Phenomenological Research**

Over the course of the past year this enterprise has taken me to places and insights that were previously unimaginable. Having been granted a leave of absence to work full time on this thesis has given me adequate time to reflect and fully immerse myself in the

research process. This time has also allowed me to expand the scope of this research and to discuss findings, implications, and results at conferences and with other graduate students in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The opportunity provided to me has allowed me to meditate, engage in discussion, and further reflect which has led, as van Manen (1990) suggests, to my ability to assign meaning to the lived experiences of the interns that I interviewed for this study.

### **Taking Time to Understand and Establish Epoch**

Being removed from the classroom setting has also aided in my ability to put aside my own personal experiences and to put more distance between my own beliefs and experiences and those of the subjects in this study. By removing myself from the physical space of the school and its culture, I have been able to attempt to hold my own experiences, professional relationships, and friendships in abeyance. While it is impossible to fully remove one's self from my own experiences and influences, I have been able to create some distance and perspective from the teaching world. This has aided in establishing epoch, as Moustakas (1994) describes it, by creating an "original vantage point" (p. 86), intentionally clearing my mind and creating space and time for reflection. In conducting the interviews I found that by orienting myself to the questions and inviting the participants to share their own specific examples, as van Manen (1990) describes. I was able to obtain vivid descriptions including emotional responses to the experiences of the interns.

### **Recognizing the Themes as They Emerged**

Using the framework for transcendental analysis as outlined by van Manen (1990) was extremely rewarding. I found the process of holistic reading, selective reading, and



detailed reading to be very logical and made sense of the unique and diverse experiences of the interns. As the themes emerged I became more and more excited by the clarity with which they seemed to appear and at the same time saddened by the apparent negativity shared by the interns regarding parts of their internship, especially the relationships that they had with their cooperating teachers. For a period of time I was concerned that the negativity that was shared through the thematic development might become the focus of this study. I am hopeful that through the hermeneutical analysis and the resulting findings and implications that a more balanced conclusion has been met.

### **Making Sense of it All**

The hermeneutical analysis was conducted after thorough consideration and meditation on the experiences described by each of the participants. Through the transcendental analysis I came to know each of the participants as the interns that they were. Their vivid and at times emotional descriptions allowed me to see the experiences through their eyes and then in turn relate those experiences to the current literature on Generation Y teachers entering the workforce, mentorship and induction, and PLCs as a model for effective teaching. The results of this were fascinating, rewarding and transformative. I was advised by a member of my committee that, “a thesis is never done.” I have found this to be true as questions and new understandings continue to emerge as I reflect on the experiences of the participants and on my own experiences throughout this process.

### **Final Thoughts**

This process has been transformative and very satisfying. Over the course of the past year I have observed changes in the way in which I approach problems that are a

result of my experiences as a phenomenological researcher. I have had to become more patient and reflective. I have learned how to be more open and honest about my reflections and observations. I had to learn how to allow myself to be guided by the process and participants. In the final analysis phenomenological research is not about the researcher or the outcomes of the research, it is about the participants. The goal of phenomenology is to recognize the inherent knowledge contained in the lived experiences of the participants. Anything that we as researchers can learn from these experiences is predicated on being open and honest about the events and the meaning that they had for those who lived them.

The impact that this new generation of teachers will have on education has the potential to be truly transformative, if the conditions allow Generation Y teachers to play to their strengths and to bring their best selves into the classroom. Systemic change can be compared to a tall ship on the ocean. If the change, like the wind, is steady, in the direction of the goal, and not too forceful; the system or organization, like the ship, will move steadily towards its destination. If the change, like the wind, is all at once or swirling; the system or organization, like the ship, can be placed in peril. Generation Y will, as each generation before it, change the world to reflect its image. The goal of policy makers should be to understand and foster the best that this interconnected and technologically savvy generation has to offer. If organizational leaders, like a good captain, can recognize the winds of change and set course accordingly Generation Y teachers can have a positive impact on the way in which education is delivered, student outcomes, and the nature of work in schools.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, M. B. G., & Iwanicki, E. F. (1984). Teacher motivation and its relationship to burnout. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 20(2), 109.
- Anhorn, R. (2008). The profession that eats its young. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 74(3), 15-26.
- Barth, B. (2002). The teachers' construction of knowledge. In B. Moon, J. Butcher & E. Bird (Eds.), *Leading professional development in education* (pp. 189-199). London: Routledge Falmer.
- Bartlett, S., & LeRose, M. (Writers). (2010). Hyper parents & coddled kids [Video]. In D. Film (Producer), *Doc Zone*. Cananda: CBC.
- Behrstock, E., & Clifford, M. (2009). Leading Gen Y teachers: Emerging strategies for school leaders. *Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality*. Retrieved June, 18, 2009.
- Bickmore, D. L., & Bickmore, S. T. (2010). A multifaceted approach to teacher induction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(4), 1006-1014. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2009.10.043
- Carr, P. R., & Porfilio, B. J. (2011). The Obama education files: Is there hope to stop the neoliberal agenda in education? *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 4(1), 1-30.
- Coggsall, J. G., Behrstock-Sherratt, E., & Drill, K. (2011). Workplaces that support high-performing teaching and learning: Insights from Generation Y teachers. *American Institutes for Research*.
- Coggsall, J. G., Ott, A., Behrstock, E., & Lasagna, M. (2010). Retaining teacher talent: The view from generation Y. *Public Agenda*, 28.
- Coley, D. C. (2009). Leading Generation Y. *Principal Leadership*, 9(6), 24-28.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6.
- Davidson-Harden, A., Kuehn, L., Schugurensky, D., & Smaller, H. (2009). Neoliberalism and education in Canada. *The rich world and the impoverishment of education: Diminishing democracy, equity and workers' rights*, 1, 51-73.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 49(1), 14-23.
- DuFour, R. (2003). Building a Professional Learning Community. *School Administrator*, 60(5), 13-18.
- DuFour, R. (2004). What Is a "Professional Learning Community"? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.
- Eisner, S. P. (2005). Managing generation Y. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 70(4), 4-15.
- Elmore, R. (1996). Getting to scale with good educational practice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 1-27.

- Fullan, M. (2006). Leading professional learning. *School Administrator*, 63(10).
- Fullan, M. (2010). *All systems go: The change imperative for whole system reform*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Hellner, J. (2008). The professional learning community: A fulcrum of change. *Kairaranga*, 9(1), 50-54.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). Is there really a teacher shortage? *GSE Publications*.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2004). Do teacher induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin*, 88(638), 28-40. doi: 10.1177/019263650408863803
- Lancaster, L. C., & Stillman, D. (2010). *The m-factor: How the millennial generation is rocking the workplace* New York: Harper Collins.
- Le Maistre, C., & Pare, A. (2010). Whatever it takes: How beginning teachers learn to survive. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 559-564. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2009.06.016
- Levin, B. (2004). Media-government relations in education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(3), 271-283. doi: 10.1080/0268093042000207610
- Levin, B., & Naylor, N. (2007). Using resources effectively in education. *Intelligent leadership*, 143-158.
- Lewis, M., & Staehler, T. (2010). *Phenomenology: An introduction*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Lipkin, N. A., & Perrymore, A. J. (2009). *Y in the workplace: Managing the "me first" generation*. Franklin Lakes: Career Press.
- McCann, T. M., & Johannessen, L. R. (2004). Why do new teachers cry? *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 77(4), 138-145.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Palmer, R. E. (1969). *Hermeneutics*: Northwestern University Press.
- Pink, D. H. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Pletka, B. (2007). *Educating the net generation*. Santa Monica: Santa Monica Press.
- Rebore, R. W., & Walmsley, A. L. E. (2010). *Recruiting and retaining Generation Y teachers*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Reynolds, L., Bush, E. C., & Geist, R. (2008). The gen y imperative. *Communication World*, 25(3), 19-22.
- Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*: Capstone.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.
- Shaffer, J. (2008). Gen Y talent: How to attract and retain the young and the restless (White Paper) (Vol. 27). Redwood Shores.
- Short, P. M. (1994). Defining teacher empowerment. *Education*, 114, 488-492.
- Supovitz, J. (2002). Developing communities of instructional practice. *The Teachers College Record*, 104(8), 1591-1626.
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Tapscott, D., & Williams, A. D. (2010). Innovating the 21st-century university: It's time. *Educause Review*, 17-29.
- Tulgan, B. (2009). *Not everyone gets a trophy*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- University of Saskatchewan. (2011a). Internship: General description and expectations, from <http://www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/internship/description-expectations.php>
- University of Saskatchewan. (2011b). Orientation - University of Saskatchewan Retrieved November, 14, 2011, from <http://students.usask.ca/new/transition/orientation.php>
- University of Saskatchewan. (2011c). U of S: Experiance US Retrieved November, 14, 2011, from <http://explore.usask.ca/events/experience/>
- University of Saskatchewan. (2011d). U of S: On campus day Retrieved November 14, 2011, from <http://explore.usask.ca/events/oncampusday/>
- University of Saskatchewan. (2012). Elementary/middle years or secondary sequential bachelor of education Retrieved July 16, 2012, from <http://www.usask.ca/education/program/prospective-students/sequential.php>
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived expereince: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, ON: The Althouse Press.
- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 80-91.
- Wang, J., & Odell, S. J. (2003). Learning to teach toward standards-based writing instruction: Experiences of two preservice teachers and two mentors in an urban, multicultural classroom. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(2), 147-174.
- Wang, J., Odell, S. J., & Schwille, S. A. (2008). Effects of teacher induction on beginning teachers' teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(2), 132-152. doi: 10.1177/0022487107314002
- Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2007). Teachers: The next generation. *ASCD Express*, 2, 13.
- Wood, A. (2005). The importance of principals: Site administrators' roles in novice teacher induction. *American Secondary Education*, 33(2), 39-62.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Application for Approval of Research Protocol**



## Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

### APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL

---

1. **Name of researcher(s)**  
 Dr. Michelle Prytula                      Supervisor, Educational Administration  
  
**Name of student**  
 Vincent R. Mamer                      M.Ed. Student, Educational Administration
  
- 1b. **Anticipated start date of the research study (phase) and the expected completion date of the study (phase).**  
  
 Anticipated Start Date:                      February 2012  
 Anticipated Completion Date:                      August 2012
  
2. **Title of Study**  
*Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*
  
3. **Abstract (100-250 words)**  
 Current literature on Generation Y suggests that members of this generation desire meaningful work that is based on collaboration. Using a phenomenological approach, the purpose of this study is to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration as a result of their internship. Interns will be invited to portray their experiences collaborating with teachers in the schools where they were placed and how they viewed that collaborative relationship. The study will be guided by the questions: How do Generation Y interns experience collaboration? What are Generation Y interns' perceptions of collaboration as a result of their experiences?
  
4. **Funding**  
 The study will be funded by the researcher.
  
5. **Expertise**  
 This research study does not include vulnerable populations or distinct cultural groups, and is not above minimal risk, so expertise is inapplicable.
  
6. **Conflict of Interest**  
 There is no anticipated conflict of interest in this study.
  
7. **Participants**  
 In order to recruit post-interns for this study, purposeful sampling will be employed to select participants. Returning interns will be approached in class by

requesting access from instructing professors to sections consisting of mostly post internship students. Less than ten minutes of class time will be used. Two classes will be approached initially using the information in the invitation letter (Appendix A); if fewer than 20 students respond from the first two classes I will systematically continue to approach other instructors to request access to their classes to request student participants. Students who are interested in participating in the study will be asked to provide their name and email contact information on a sign up sheet and will be contacted by e-mail and invited to participate in the survey using the letter of invitation and the consent form in Appendix A. Potential participants will be asked two screening questions via e-mail, which will focus on the interns' experience with collaboration. Interns who are able to demonstrate interest in the research by responding thoughtfully to the questions and demonstrate that they have knowledge about the phenomenon of collaboration within the internship will be selected.

**7a. Recruitment Material**

A sample of the recruitment material that will be used in this study is included as Appendix A.

**8. Consent**

After reading the letter of invitation and the consent form, students will decide whether they would like to be involved in this study. Those who choose to be involved will be asked to give consent by signing the study informed consent form (see Appendix A). Participants will be informed that they may withdraw at any time and may retract any data that was provided for the study. Participants' right to withdraw data from the study will apply until May 1. After May 1, the results from the study may have been collated into the thesis and the data may not be possible to remove.

**9. Methods/Procedures**

The participants will be purposefully selected from post-internship students who have completed their internship in the preceding semester. Data will be collected through a series of interviews with four participants who match the requirements for a study of this nature. For this study purposeful sampling will be employed to select participants. Returning interns will be approached in class by requesting access from instructing professors to sections consisting of mostly post internship students. Less than ten minutes of class time will be used. Two classes will be approached initially; if fewer than 20 students respond from the first two classes I will systematically continue to approach instructors and request access to their classes to request student participants. I will present each class with the information found in the study information letter (see Appendix A). Students who are interested in participating in the study will be invited to provide their name and email contact information on a sign up sheet (see Appendix A) and will be contacted by e-mail. Potential participants will be asked two screening questions via e-mail, which will focus on the interns' experience with collaboration. Interns who are able to demonstrate interest in the research by responding thoughtfully to



the questions and demonstrate that they have knowledge about the phenomenon of collaboration within the internship will be selected.

A follow up interview to probe for greater clarification of results from the initial interview will be conducted if necessary.

**10. Storage of Data**

Upon completion of the study, all collected data (audio recordings, transcripts, correspondence between researchers and participants, electronic files, and notes taken by the researchers) will be retained by my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Prytula of Educational Administration in the College of Education according to the guidelines defined by the University of Saskatchewan. After the study is complete, data will be stored in a locked cabinet for a minimum of five years. After this period of time, the data will be destroyed.

**11. Dissemination of Results**

The data and results from this study will be used in partial fulfillment of a master's degree. Results from the study may also be used in presentations or may be submitted in articles for publication. The anonymity of the participants, their respective locations, and events will be respected at all times by use of pseudonyms.

**12. Risk, Benefits, and Deception**

The potential benefits of this research is the potential to inform policy development at the division level and the creation of an attraction and retention strategy that reflects the cultural and professional needs of Generation Y teachers as they enter the workforce. Because the study focuses on interns from the College of Education, it may also have implications for post secondary institutions and the development of their teacher education programs.

There is the possibility that participants may share information that may put the participant or a third party at risk, if their identity was compromised. For example, an educator may name a school, fellow educator, administrator, or describe a situation that would threaten anonymity. Because of this, names and locations will be changed to protect the anonymity of the participants, and extra care will be taken when reporting vulnerable segments from interviews. As well, when approving interview transcripts, participants will be able to make changes if they feel that the information contained in the transcript could compromise their or a third party's anonymity or damage reputation. Participants are able to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants' right to withdraw data from the study will apply until May 1. After May 1, the results from the study may have been collated into the thesis and the data may not be possible to remove..

To assess the degree of risk involved in this study, I have considered the following questions:

- a) *Are you planning to study a vulnerable population? This would include, for example, people who are in a state of emotional distress, who are physically ill, who have recently experienced a traumatic event, or who have been recruited into the study because they have previously experienced a severe emotional trauma, such as abuse.*

Interns are not a vulnerable population.

- b) *Are you planning to study a captive or dependent population, such as children or prisoners?*

Interns are neither captive nor dependent.

- c) *Is there an institutional/ power relationship between researcher and participant (e.g., employer/employee, teacher/student, counsellor/client)?*

The relationship is researcher to intern; a power relationship does not exist.

- d) *Will it be possible to associate specific information in your data file with specific participants?*

The researcher will take measures to ensure that the information in the data file cannot be associated with specific participants.

- e) *Is there a possibility that third parties may be exposed to loss of confidentiality/ anonymity?*

To ensure that third parties will not be exposed to loss of confidentiality or anonymity, exceptional care will be taken in the reporting of the results.

- f) *Are you using audio or videotaping?*

All interviews will be recorded using audio. The researcher will be the only person who hears the interviews. The transcripts will be made available to the interviewees if they wish to review them. They will have the opportunity to make changes if they believe the information within the transcript will compromise their anonymity or that of a third party. Participants will be asked to sign a transcript release form (Appendix B) when the transcripts are deemed appropriate.

- g) *Will participants be actively deceived or misled?*

Participants will not be deceived or misled during this study.

- h) *Are the research procedures likely to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue, or stress?*

The research procedures are not intended to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue, or stress. If participants experience discomfort, they are free to remove themselves from the study at any point in time.

The interviews with interns will be conducted as a collegial conversation, therefore no discomfort, fatigue, or stress should arise. Anticipated time frame for the interview should revolve around one hour.

- i) *Do you plan to ask participants questions that are personal or sensitive? Are there questions that might be upsetting to the respondent?*

The researcher does not plan to ask personal or sensitive questions directed at upsetting the participants. The interview questions will be open-ended, and directed by the participants.

- j) *Are the procedures likely to induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, distress, or any other negative emotional state?*

The research is unlikely to induce a negative emotional state in participants.

- k) *Is there any social risk (e.g., possible loss of status, privacy or reputation)?*

The researcher will ensure careful consideration while reporting results so as to prevent the possible social risk of loss of privacy and loss of reputation.

- l) *Will the research infringe on the rights of participants by, for example, withholding beneficial treatment in control groups, restricting access to education or treatment?*

The research will not infringe upon the rights of the participants.

- m) *Will participants receive compensation of any type? Is the degree of compensation sufficient to act as a coercion to participate?*

Each participant will receive compensation in the form of a small thank-you gift as a token of the researchers' gratitude for their participation in the study. It will not be used as a form of coercion. Each participant shall receive a gift card for McNally Robinson Booksellers in the amount of \$50.

- n) *Can you think of any other possible harm that participants might experience as a result of participating in this study?*

No, I cannot think of any other possible harm that participants might experience by participating in the study.

### 13. **Confidentiality**

To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and third parties, pseudonyms will be used for names, locations, programs, and events. Aggregate results will be reported to avoid identification of particular participants through scenarios and stories. Direct quotations will be used in the results (quotations will be carefully chosen so as not to identify the participant), but the quotation will not be attributed to the specific participant. Participants will be informed of the potential risk of participating in the study, and will be asked to sign a transcript release form (see Appendix B). Throughout the interviews, participants have the

right to answer only the questions that they are comfortable answering, and they may also request to turn off the recorder at any time. Participants will be asked to review the final transcripts, and will be able to add, alter or delete information that relates to them, and sign a transcript release form wherein they acknowledge by that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say (see Appendix B). In addition, if participants share experiences that may compromise a certain place or people as a result of the experience, the experience will not be used in its entirety. It will either be collated or aggregated with others or only certain parts will be used. Again, all participants will be provided with the option to remove data from their transcripts prior to its use and up to May 1.

#### **14. Data/Transcript Release**

After the interview process and before findings are published, all participants have the opportunity to withdraw their responses in part or in whole until May 1, after which the data may already be collated. All participants will have the opportunity to review the final transcript and sign the transcript release form to acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say (included in Appendix B).

#### **15. Debriefing and Feedback**

The researchers' contact information will be shared with the participants. Therefore if at any point during the process they wish to contact them with questions or concerns, they will have to the avenue to do so. When the research is completed, a summary of the results will be delivered to the participants. Upon request, an electronic copy of the completed results will also be available to participants.

#### **16. Required Signatures**

---

Dr. Michelle Prytula  
Researcher

---

Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart  
Department Head

---

Vincent R. Mamer  
Student

#### **17. Required Contact Information**

Dr. Michelle Prytula  
Supervisor  
Educational Administration  
College of Education  
University of Saskatchewan  
28 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
(306) 966-6880  
[michelle.prytula@usask.ca](mailto:michelle.prytula@usask.ca)

Vincent R. Mamer  
M. Ed. Student  
Educational Administration  
College of Education  
University of Saskatchewan  
28 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
(306) 260-3441  
[vrn743@mail.usask.ca](mailto:vrn743@mail.usask.ca)

Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart  
Department Head  
Educational Administration  
College of Education  
University of Saskatchewan  
28 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1  
(306) 966-7611  
[sheila.carr-stewart@usask.ca](mailto:sheila.carr-stewart@usask.ca)

**Appendix B**  
**Participant Recruitment Documents**

## Study Information Letter

[Insert Date]

Dear Intern:

My name is Vincent Mamer and I am a Masters' of Education student with the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. As a part of my program, I am conducting a study titled *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*. The purpose of the study is to relate select Generation Y experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration as a result of their internship.

If you would like to participate in the study, please provide your contact information on the attached sheets. Interested participants will be contacted by e-mail and asked to fill out an initial survey. There may be opportunity for involvement in an individual interview.

Please read the information below, which explains the study in greater detail.

### Researchers:

Michelle Prytula, Ph.D.	University of Saskatchewan	966-6880
Vincent R. Mamer M Ed. Student	University of Saskatchewan	260-3441

**Potential Risks:** All participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and names and locations will be changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. There is the possibility that participants may share information that may put the participant or a third party at risk, if their identity was compromised. Aggregate results will be reported to avoid identification of particular participants through scenarios and stories. Direct quotations will be used in the results (quotations will be carefully chosen so as not to identify the participant), but the quotation will not be attributed to the specific participant. Throughout the interviews, participants have the right to answer only the questions that they are comfortable answering, and they may also request to turn off the recorder at any time. Participants will be asked to review the final transcripts, and will be able to add, alter or delete information that relates to them, and sign a transcript release form wherein they acknowledge by that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say. In addition, if participants share experiences that may compromise a certain place or people as a result of the experience, the experience will not be used in its entirety. It will either be collated or aggregated with others or only certain parts will be used. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time., and all participants will be provided with the option to remove data from their transcripts prior to its use and up to May 1.

**Potential Benefits:** The potential benefits of this research is the potential to inform policy development at the division level and the creation of an attraction and retention strategy that reflects the cultural and professional needs of Generation Y teachers as they enter the workforce. Because the study focuses on interns from the College of Education, it may also have implications for post secondary institutions and the development of their teacher education programs.

**Storage of Data:** Upon completion of the study, all surveys will be securely stored and retained by Dr. Michelle Prytula in accordance with the guidelines defined by the University of Saskatchewan. The data will be stored for five years after completion of the study. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** All names and locations will be given pseudonyms in this study. Direct quotations may be used as supports to the themes, however, name and location pseudonyms will be used in the quotes as well. Aggregate results will be reported to avoid identification of particular participants through scenarios and stories. . In addition, if participants share experiences that may compromise a certain place or people as a result of the experience, the experience will not be used in its entirety. It will either be collated or aggregated with others or only certain parts will be used.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw your survey from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. Throughout the survey, you have the right to answer only the questions that you are comfortable answering. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until May 1. After May 1, the results from the study may have been collated into my thesis and it may not be possible to remove the data.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). A brief executive summary of the project will be provided to participants upon request.

Thank you for your willingness to contribute to the study. Your contribution of time and information is greatly appreciated! Take care and have a great day!

Respectfully,

Vincent R. Mamer, M.Ed Student  
Department of Educational Administration  
University of Saskatchewan

**Sign Up Sheet:**

I am interested in participating in the study: *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*. Please contact me using the e-mail address I have provided below.

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(e-mail address)

---



## **E-mail of Invitation to Participate in the Research Study Individual Interview - Sample**

[Insert Date]

Dear Participant:

My name is Vincent Mamer, and I am a M.Ed. student with the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. My study is titled *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*.

The purpose of the study is to relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration as a result of their internship.

As a participant I will be asking you to partake in one semi-structured individual interview. The interview will give you the opportunity to share your experiences during your internship.

It is anticipated that each interview will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. I may also contact you by telephone or e-mail in between interviews for clarification or for short questions. These would be minimal interruptions, at your convenience. If at any point in time you wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so.

In this study, all names and locations will be given pseudonyms. The educators', administrators', and students' names will be removed and replaced with pseudonyms. Direct quotations may be used as supports to the themes; however, educator, administrator, student, and location pseudonyms will be used in the quotes. Aggregate results will be reported to avoid identification of particular participants through scenarios and stories. In addition, if participants share experiences that may compromise a certain place or people as a result of the experience, the experience will not be used in its entirety. It will either be collated or aggregated with others or only certain parts will be used.

The information gathered by those who participate in this study may be used for presentations at conferences, professional venues, and academic publications. The taped interviews will be transcribed verbatim. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and you may withdraw data at any time until May 1, after which the results will be collated. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts, and to add, edit or delete any information you would like. After this process, you will be asked to sign a transcript release form. Data resulting from the interviews will be examined for themes. Direct quotations may be used in presentation of the data, but the case study results will be reported as aggregated (composite) case studies.

Your cooperation in the study *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration* would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please reply to this e-mail and respond to the following two prompts in as much detail as possible:

1. Please describe the context of your internship experience.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Please describe your views of professional collaboration.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at [vrn743@mail.usask.ca](mailto:vrn743@mail.usask.ca) or by telephone (306) 260-3441 or Dr. Prytula at [michelle.prytula@usask.ca](mailto:michelle.prytula@usask.ca) or by telephone (306) 966-6880. Thank you for your consideration of being a participant.

Respectfully,

Vincent R. Mamer, M.Ed Student  
Department of Educational Administration  
University of Saskatchewan

## **Appendix C**

### **Consent Forms and Confidentiality Agreements**

### Informed Consent Form for Participation in Individual Interviews

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

#### Researchers:

Michelle Prytula, Ph.D.                      University of Saskatchewan   (306) 966-6880  
 Vincent R. Mamer, M.Ed Student      University of Saskatchewan   (306) 260-3441

**Purpose:** To relate select Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration as a result of their internship.

**Potential Risks:** All participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and names and locations will be changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. There is the possibility that participants may share information that may put the participant or a third party at risk, if their identity was compromised. Aggregate results will be reported to avoid identification of particular participants through scenarios and stories. . In addition, if participants share experiences that may compromise a certain place or people as a result of the experience, the experience will not be used in its entirety. It will either be collated or aggregated with others or only certain parts will be used. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, and may withdraw data at any time until May 1, after which the results will be collated. Throughout the interviews, participants have the right to answer only the questions that they are comfortable answering, and they may also request to turn off the recorder at any time. Participants will be asked to review the final transcripts, and will be able to add, alter or delete information that relates to them, and sign a transcript release form wherein they acknowledge by that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say.

**Potential Benefits:** The potential benefits of this research is the potential to inform policy development at the division level and the creation of an attraction and retention strategy that reflects the cultural and professional needs of Generation Y teachers as they enter the workforce. Because the study focuses on interns from the College of Education, it may also have implications for post secondary institutions and the development of their teacher education programs.

**Storage of Data:** Upon completion of the study, all data (digital tapes, electronic, and paper) will be securely stored and retained by Dr. Michelle Prytula in accordance with the guidelines defined by the University of Saskatchewan. The data will be stored for five years after completion of the study. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** All names and locations will be given pseudonyms in this study. The educators', administrators' parents', and students' names will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym. Participants will be asked to review the final transcripts and will have the opportunity to add, alter or delete information that relates to them, and sign a transcript release form wherein they acknowledge by that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say. Data resulting from the interviews will be

examined for themes. Direct quotations may be used as supports to the themes, however, educator, administrator, parent or student name and location pseudonyms will be used in the quotes as well. The transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the participants.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, up to May 1, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request. After May 1, the results will have been collated and once the research is disseminated it may not be possible to withdraw your data. Throughout the interviews, you have the right to answer only the questions that you are comfortable answering, and you may also request to turn off the recorder at any time.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). A brief executive summary of the project will be provided to participants upon request.

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

Please provide the phone number you wish to be contacted at: \_\_\_\_\_

### Consent Form for Data Transcription Release

Study Title: *Generation Y interns' experiences with, and perceptions of collaboration*

I am returning the transcripts of your audio-recorded interviews. Please review and sign the consent for data transcription release.

I \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interviews in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from them as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interviews with Vincent Mamer. I hereby authorize the release of the transcript to Vincent Mamer to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix D**  
**Interview Protocol**

## Semi-Structured Long Interview Questions

Name of intern:

Date & Time:

### **Q1. What did you expect your internship would be like?**

- How did the experiences support or detract from your desire to be a teacher?
  - What were your feelings as you entered your internship? Were you excited, worried etc.?
- How did you feel about the workload?
  - How did you cope with the workload?
- How important was extracurricular involvement to you? To your school community?
  - Did this involvement add or relieve stress from your teaching workload? Why?

### **Q2. Describe your internship experience. What exceeded your expectations? What disappointed you?**

- Did you feel welcomed and supported by the staff and students?
  - How did it make you feel?
  - How did this affect your internship experience?
  - How did this affect your ability to manage the workload?

### **Q3. Describe situations in which you collaborated with other teachers. What did you find valuable? What did you find challenging? With whom did you collaborate with most closely and how did this come about?**

- How did working with other teachers make you feel?
- Did you ever feel that your voice was being silenced?
  - How did you react to this situation?
  - How did the situation make you feel?
- Did you ever feel that you were overstepping your role?
  - Why did you do this?
  - How did others respond to you?
  - What resulted from the situation?
  - How did you feel about how the situation played out?



**Q4. What was the focus or objective of the collaborative work that you were engaged in? Explain why this work was successful and valuable or why it failed to meet the objectives that were laid out for it?**

- Where and when did you meet to collaborate with others?
  - Was the time valuable? Why?
  - Was the environment conducive to collaboration? Why?
- How did your approach to planning, instruction, or assessment change as a result of the collaboration?
  - How did the new approach make you feel?
- What were some of the challenges or barriers you faced and how did you resolve them?
  - Were you satisfied with the results?

**Q5. How are you different now as a result of the internship? How have your views changed?**

- How has this experience influenced your perspective of what it means to be a teacher?
  - How do you feel about entering the teaching profession?
  - What are you excited about?
  - What are you worried about?